THE READJUSTMENT

WILL IRWIN

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BY

WILL IRWIN

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THE READJUSTMENT

CHAPTER I

AFTER luncheon they walked over from the ranch-house—more indeed a country villa, what with its ceiled redwood walls, its prints, its library, than the working house of a practical farm—and down the dusty, sun-beaten lane to the apricot orchard. Picking was on full blast, against the all too fast ripening of that early summer.

Judge Tiffany, pattern of a vigorous age, seemed to lean a little upon his wife as she walked beside him, her arm tucked confidently into his; but it was a leaning of the spirit rather than of the flesh. She, younger than he by fifteen years, was a tiny woman, her hair white but her waist still slim. She seemed to tinkle and twinkle. Her slight hands,—the nail of the little finger was like a grain of popcorn—moved with swift, accurate bird-motions. As she chattered of the ranch and the picking, her voice, still sweet

and controlled, came from her lips like the pleasant music of a tea bell. He was mainly silent; although he threw in a quiet, controlled answer here and there. One could read, in the shadowy solicitude with which she regarded him now and then, the relation between that welded old couple—she the entertainer, the hoarder of trivial detail from her days; he the fond, indulgent listener.

"I think Eleanor must be back from the city," Mrs. Tiffany was saying, "I notice smoke from the big chimney; and I suppose she'll be over before noon with the sulphur samples. It's amusing and homey in her—her habit of flying to her own little nest before she comes to us. She'll inspect the house, have dinner ordered, and know every blessed detail of the picking before we catch a glimpse of her." Mrs. Tiffany smiled sadly, as though this industry were somewhat tragic.

"I wonder how long Eleanor will be contented with such a way of life?" put in Judge Tiffany.

"I've worried over that," answered his wife. "Suppose she should settle down to it? It isn't as though Eleanor hadn't her chance

at travel and society and the things a girl of her breeding should have. This is all her deliberate choice, and I've done nothing to help her choose. Perhaps I should have decided for her. It's curious the guard that girl keeps over her deeper feelings. How unlike she is to her mother—and yet how like—" Her thought shifted suddenly with the direction of her eyes. "Hasn't Olsen overloaded that little team?" she said.

The cutting-shed stood midway of their course. Twenty women and girls, their lips going as rapidly as their knives, sat on fruit crates at long tables, slicing the red-and-gold balls apart, flicking out the stones, laying the halves to dry in wooden trays. A wagon had just arrived from the orchard. Olsen, the Swedish foreman, was heaving the boxes to his Portuguese assistant, who passed them on into the cutting shed. Further on stood the bleaching kilns; still further, the bright green trees with no artistic irregularities of outline —trees born, like a coolie, to bear burdens. Now the branches bent in arcs under loads of summer-gilded fruit.

Long step-ladders straddling piles of boxes, beside this row or that, showed where picking

was going forward. Mrs. Tiffany halted under one tree to call pleasantries up to a Portuguese, friend of many a harvest before. Judge Tiffany proceeded on down the row, pausing to inspect the boxes for any fruit gathered before it was ripe.

The first picker was a Chinese. His box, of course, showed only perfection of workmanship. The Judge called up familiarly:

"Hello, Charlie!"

A yellow face grinned through the branches; the leaves rustled as though some great bird were foraging, and the answer came back:

"Hello you Judge!" The Judge picked over the next two boxes without comment; at the third, he stopped longer.

"Too much greenery, young man!" he cried at length. The branches of this tree rustled, and a pair of good, sturdy legs, clad in corduroys, appeared on the ladder; then the owner of the legs vaulted from four feet high in the air, and hit the ground beside his box.

He was a stalwart boy of perhaps two and twenty, broad, though a bit over-heavy, in the shoulders. That approach to over-heaviness characterized his face, otherwise clean-cut

and fair. His eyes, long, brown and ingenuous, rather went to redeem this quality of face. Under his wide and flapping sombrero peered the front lock of his straight, black hair. Even before he smiled, Judge Tiffany marked him as a pleasing youth withal; and when he did smile, eyes and mouth so softened with good humor that stern authority went from the face of Judge Tiffany. He stood in that embarrassment which an old man feels sometimes in the presence of a younger one, struggled for a word to cover his slight confusion, and said:

"You are one of the college outfit camped down by the arroyo, aren't you?"

"I am," said the youth. "I also picked the fruit too green. I am here to take my beating."

Judge Tiffany, who held (he thought) an old-fashioned distaste for impudence, smiled back in spite of himself.

"If you don't attend to business in small matters, how can you hope to succeed when you go out into life?" he asked with some pomposity. He had intended, when he opened his mouth, to say something very different. His pomposity, he felt, grew out of

his embarrassment; he had a dim feeling that he was making himself ridiculous.

"I can't," said the youth with mock meekness; and he smiled again. At that moment, while the Judge struggled for a reply and while the youth was turning back to the ladder as though to mount it and be done with the conversation, two things happened. Up from one side came Mrs. Tiffany; and from the other, where ran a road dividing the Tiffany orchard from the next, approached a buckboard driven by a lolling Portuguese. Beside him sat a girl all in brown, dust-resistant khaki, who curtained her face with a parasol. Mrs. Tiffany ran, light as an elderly fairy, down the rows.

"Eleanor!" she called.

"Dear, dear Aunt Mattie!" cried the girl. Judge Tiffany, too, was hurrying forward to the road. The youth had his hand on the ladder, prepared to mount, when the parasol dropped. He stopped short with some nervous interruption in his breathing—which might have been a catch in his throat—at the sight of her great, grey eyes; stood still, watching. Mrs. Tiffany was greeting the girl with the pats and caresses of aged fond-

ness. Out of their chatter, presently, this came in the girl's voice:

"And I was so excited about getting back that when Antonio left the corral gate open I never thought to speak to him. And Ruggles's Dynamo—they've let him run away again—just walked in and butted open the orchard bars and he's loose now eating the prune trees!"

"Edward, you must go right over!" cried Mrs. Tiffany; and then stopped on the thought of an old man trying to subdue a Jersey bull, good-natured though that bull might be. The same thought struck Judge Tiffany. Antonio, the Portuguese, lolling half-asleep against the dashboard, was worse than useless; the nearest visible help was a Chinaman, incompetent against horned cattle, and another Portuguese, and—

"Let me corral your bull," said the easy, thrilling voice of the boy who stood beside the step-ladder. Judge Tiffany turned in reproof, his wife in annoyance, the girl in some surprise. The youth was already walking toward the buckboard.

"I guess that lets you out, John," he said to the Portuguese.

Something in him, the same quality which had made the Judge smile back through his rebuke concerning the green apricots, held them all. The Judge spoke first:

"Very well, Mr.—"

"Chester—Bertram Chester," said the youth, throwing his self-introduction straight at the girl.

"Mr. Chester is one of the University boys who are picking for us this summer," said Judge Tiffany.

"Yes?" replied the girl in a balanced, incurious tone. Her eyes followed Mr. Chester, while he took the reins from the deposed Antonio and waited for her to mount the buckboard. As she sprang up, after a final caution from Mrs. Tiffany, she perceived that he was going to "help her in." With a motion both quick and slight, she evaded his hand and sprang to the seat unaided.

Mr. Chester slapped the reins, clucked to the horse, and bent his gaze down upon the girl. He had seated himself all too close. She crowded herself against the iron seat-rail. It annoyed her a little; it embarrassed her still more. She was slightly relieved when he made a beginning of conversation.

"So you're Judge Tiffany's niece, the girl who runs her ranch herself. I've heard heaps about you."

"Yes?" Embarrassment came back with the sound of her own voice. She could talk to Judge Tiffany or to any man of Judge Tiffany's age, but with her male contemporaries she felt always this same constraint. And this young man was looking on her insistently, as though demanding answers.

"They say you're one of the smartest ranchers in these parts," he went on.

"Do they?" Her tone was even and inexpressive. But Mr. Chester kept straight along the path he was treading.

"And that you're also the prettiest girl around Santa Lucia."

"That's very kind of them."

"I haven't seen your ranch, but about the rest of it they're dead right."

To this, she made no answer.

"I'm just down for a few weeks," he went on, changing the subject when he perceived that he had drawn no reply. "I'm a Senior next year at Berkeley. Ever been over to Berkeley?"

"Yes."

"Ever go to any of the class dances?"

"No."

"Thought you might, being in the city winters. I'm not much on dances myself. I'm a barb."

He peered, as though expecting that this last statement would evoke some answer. But her eyes were fixed on the little group of buildings—a bungalow, a barn and a corral—which had just come in sight around a turn of the orchard road. For the first time, she spoke with animation.

"There's the house—and there he is, just back of the stable!"

Dynamo, the bull, a black and tan patch amidst the greenery, stood reaching with his tongue at an overhanging prune branch, bowed to the breaking point with green beads of fruit. As they watched, he sucked its tip between his blue lips, pulled at it with a twist of his head; the branch cracked and broke. Dynamo, his eyes closed in meditative enjoyment, started to absorb it from end to end.

"Oh, dear, he'll ruin it!" she cried. "Do hurry! Hadn't you better send for help?"

"I figure I can handle him," said Bertram Chester, bristling at the imputation. "Just

give me that halter and drive in back of the corral, will you?"

"Please don't let him trample any trees!" she called after her champion as he vaulted the fence.

Dynamo, seeing the end of his picnic at hand, galloped awkwardly a few rods, the branch trailing from his mouth. Then, with the ponderous but sudden shift of bull psychology, indignation rose in his bosom. He stopped himself so short that his fore-hoofs plowed two long furrows in the soft earth; whirled, lifted his muzzle, and bellowed. One fore-hoof tore up the dirt and showered it over his back. He dropped to his knees and rubbed the ground with his neck in sheer abandonment to the joy of his own abandoned wickedness. He rose up in the hollow which he had dug, lowered his horns, and glowered at the youth, who advanced with a kind of awkward bull-strength of his own.

"Chase yourself!" cried Bertram Chester, flicking the halter. For a second, Dynamo's eyelids fluttered; then, unaccountably, his bull pride rose up in him. He stopped midway of a bellow; his head went down, his tail rose up—and he charged. The girl across

the fence gave a little scream. The youth, stepping aside with a quickness marvelous considering the size of his frame, avoided the charge. As Dynamo tore past him, he struck out—a mighty lash—with the halter. The bull tore on until he smashed into a prune tree. The green fruit flew like water splashing from a stone; and Dynamo checked his course, turned again, began to paw and challenge as the preliminary to another charge.

"Oh, let him go—please!" cried Eleanor. Whether he heard her or no made little difference to the youth. Taking advantage of Dynamo's slight hesitation, he sprang in close, caught him by the horn and the tender, black nose; and back and forth, across the ruins of the prune tree, which went flat at the first rally, they fought and tugged and tossed. Through the agonized half-bellows of Dynamo, Eleanor caught a slighter sound. Her champion was swearing! Raised a little above her fears by the vicarious joy of fight, she took no offence at this; it seemed part of the picture.

No one can account for the emotional processes of a bull. Just as suddenly as it rose, Dynamo's courage evaporated. Once more

was he brother to the driven ox. He ceased to plant his fore feet; his bellow became a moan; he gave backward; in one mighty toss, he threw off his conqueror, turned, and galloped down the orchard with his tail curved like a pretzel across his back. Behind him followed the youth, lashing him with the halter as long as he could keep it up, pelting him with rocks and clods as the retreat gained. So, in a cloud of dust, they vanished into the Santa Clara road.

When Bertram Chester came back panting, to return the halter, Antonio had arrived and was unhitching the bay mare from the buckboard. Eleanor stood by the corral gate, her Panama hat fallen back from her brown hair and a little of the excitement left in her grey eyes. Bertram approached, grinning; he wore a swagger like that of a little boy who has just turned a series of somersaults before the little girls. Eleanor noticed this. Faintly—and in spite of the gratitude she owed him for turning a neighborly service into a heroic deed—she resented it. Also, Dynamo and Mr. Chester, between them, had wholly ruined a good prune tree in the prime of bearing.

"Say, we didn't do a thing to that tree," said Bertram Chester, with the air of one who deprecates himself that he may leave the road wide open for praise.

"It doesn't matter. It—it was very brave of you. Thank you very much—are you hurt?"

"Only mussed up a little." He blinked perceptibly at the coolness in her tone. Then he leaned back against a fence-post with the settled air of one who expects to continue the conversation. She swayed slightly away from him.

"Kind of nice place," he said, sweeping his eye over the shingled cottage whose rose-bushes were making a brave fight against the dry summer dust, over the tiny lawn, over the Lombardy poplars.

"It's nice of you to say so."

Bertram turned his eye upon her again.

"Say," said he, "I don't believe the Judge expects me back right away! Anything more I can do around the place?"

Eleanor smiled through her slight resentment.

"I don't think I care to take the responsi-

bility." In that moment, the butcher-wagon, making the rounds from farm-house to farm-house, appeared quite suddenly at the bend of the road. Maria, wife of Antonio and cook for Eleanor's haciendetta, ran out to meet it.

"Oh, Maria—tell Mr. Bowles I want to see him!" cried Eleanor, and hurried toward the house. Bertram Chester stood deserted for a moment, and then;

"Good bye!" he called after her.

"Good bye and thank you so much!" she answered over her shoulder.

Two minutes later, Mr. Bowles, driver of the meat wagon, was saying to Eleanor:

"Which was it—rib or loin for Saturday, Miss Gray?"

"Was it?" said Eleanor, absently; and she fell to silence. Maria and Mr. Bowles, waiting respectfully for her decision, followed her eyes. She was looking at a dust cloud which trailed down the lane. When she came out of her revery and beheld them both watching, silent and open-mouthed, she flushed violently.

Bertram Chester, swinging between the green rows, was whistling blithely:

"Say coons have you ebber ebber seen ma Angeline?
She am de swetes' swetes' coon you ebber seen."

CHAPTER II

EVERY Sunday afternoon during the picking season, Mrs. Tiffany served tea on the lawn for the half-dozen familiar households on the Santa Lucia tract. That was the busy time of all the year, affording no leisure for those dinners and whist parties which came in the early season, when the country families had just arrived from town, or in the late season, when prune picking grew slack. Night finds one weary in the country, even when his day has brought only supervision of labor. These town-bred folk, living from the soil and still but half welded to it, fell unconsciously into farmer habits in this working period.

The Goodyears and the Morses, more formal than their neighbors, did indeed give a dinner once or twice a summer to this or that visitor from San Francisco or San Jose. Otherwise, the colony gathered only at this Sunday afternoon tea of Mrs. Tiffany's. Her

place lay about midway of the colony, her lawn, such as it was—no lawn flourishes greatly in that land of dry summers—was the oldest and best kept of all; further, they had acquired the habit. Already, these Californians were beginning a country life remotely like that of England; a country life made gracious by all the simple refinements, from bathtubs to books. They had settled, too, into the ways of a clique; small and informal as their entertainments were, minor jealousies of leadership had developed already.

By a kind of consent never yet made law by any contest, the Goodyears were leaders and dictators. He, Raleigh Goodyear, was passably rich; his wife was by birth of that old Southern set which dominated the society of San Francisco from its very beginning. Until their only daughter married into the army and, by her money and connections, advanced her husband to a staff position in Washington, Mrs. Goodyear had figured among the patrons to those cotillions and assemblies by which the elect, under selection of a wine agent, set themselves off from the aspiring. Them the colony treated with familiar deference.

Mrs. Tiffany, whose native desire to please and accommodate had grown with her kind of matrimony, held social leadership of a different kind. Her summer house was the boudoir of this colony, as her town house was the centre for quiet and informal entertainment just tinged with Bohemia. Hers was the gate at which one stopped for a greeting and a chat as one drove past on the road; she was forever running to that gate. She knew the troubles of all her neighbors, both the town dwellers of her set and the humbler folk who made fruit farming more of a business. That rather silent husband of hers—a man getting an uncomfortable peace from the end of a turbulent and disappointing life which had just escaped great success—told her that she had one great fault of the head. She must always make a martyr of herself by bearing the burdens of her world.

The Judge and Mrs. Tiffany sat now, in the early afternoon of a summer Sunday, under the gigantic live-oak which shadowed their piazza. She was crocheting a pink scarf, through which her tiny fingers flew like shuttles; he was reading. Out beyond their hacienda, the American "hands," fresh-

shaved for Sunday, lolled on the ground over a lazy game of cards. From the creek bottom further on, came a sound which, in the distance, resembled the drumming of cicadas —a Chinese workman was lulling his ease with a moon-fiddle. Near at hand stood the tea things, all prepared before Molly, the maid, started for her Sunday afternoon visit to the camp of the women cutters. Factory girls from the city, these cutters, making a vacation of the summer work.

Mrs. Tiffany glanced up from her yarns at the leonine head of her husband, bent above "The History of European Morals," opened her mouth as though to speak; thought better of it, apparently. Twice she looked up like this, her air showing that she was not quite confident of his sympathy in that which she meant to bring forward.

"Edward!" she said at length, quite loud. He lowered the book and removed his reading glasses, held them poised—a characteristic gesture with him. He said no word; between them, a glance was enough.

"You remember the young man who went over with Eleanor to drive away the Ruggles bull?"

Judge Tiffany gave assent by a slight inclination of his head.

"I went over to the camp of those University boys yesterday," she went on, running loops with incredible speed, "and I don't quite like the way they are living there. They associate too much with the cutting-women. You know, Edward, that isn't good for boys of their age—and they must be nice at bottom or they wouldn't be trying to work their way through college—"

She stopped as though to note the effect. The ripple of a smile played under Judge Tiffany's beard. She caught at her next words a little nervously.

"You know we have a responsibility for the people about the place, Edward—I couldn't bear to think we'd let any nice college boy degenerate because we employed him—and it is so easy at their age."

"Which means," broke in the Judge, "that you have asked this Mr. Chester up here to tea."

"If—if you wish it, Edward."

"I can't very well countermand your invitation and tell him by the foreman not to come. But I warn you that this social recog-

nition will serve as no excuse if I catch him picking any more green apricots."

Mrs. Tiffany, unturned by this breeze of criticism, ran along on her own tack.

"His manners *are* a little forward, but he has a nice way of speaking. I'm sure he is a gentleman, at bottom. You can't expect such a young man, who has been obliged to work his way, to have all the graces at once. They've brought down their town clothes—I saw them last Sunday—so you needn't be afraid of that. I've asked Mr. Heath, too."

"Is that by way of another introduction?" asked Judge Tiffany. His eyes looked at her severely, but his beard showed that he was smiling gently again. Half his joy in a welded marriage lay in his appreciation of her humors, as though one should laugh at himself.

"Oh, there's no doubt that *he's* a gentleman. He is less loud, somehow, than Mr. Chester, though he hasn't his charm. It seems there is the most wonderful boy friendship between them."

"Where did you get all this insight into the social life of our employees?" asked Judge

Tiffany; and then, "Mattie, you've been exposing yourself to the night air again."

"Over at their camp last evening," said Mrs. Tiffany. "Well, and isn't it my business to look after—after that side of the ranch?" she added.

The Judge had dropped the book now; his senses were alert to the game which never grew old to him—"Mattie-baiting" he had named it.

"Mattie," he said, "with a pretty and marriageable, dowered and maiden niece on your hands, a new era is opening in your life of passionate self-sacrifice. It used to be orphan children and neglected wives of farm hands. Now it is presentable but neglected bachelors. Your darling match for Eleanor, I suppose, would be some young soul snatched from evil courses, pruned, trimmed, and delivered at the altar with 'Made by Mattie Tiffany' branded on his wings. Spare, O spare your innocent niece!"

"Edward, I never thought of it in that light!" cried Mrs. Tiffany; and she bent herself to furious crocheting. After a time, and when the Judge had resumed his book, she looked up and added:

"It might be worse, though, than a young man who had made it all himself."

Judge Tiffany burst into laughter. Then, seeing her bend closer over her pink yarns, he grew grave, reached for the hand which held the needles, and kissed it.

That was her reward of childless matrimony, as the appreciation of her humors was his.

While they sat thus, in one of their comfortable hours, the guests were come. The Morses appeared first. He was a pleasant, hollow-chested little man; his delicacy of lung gave him his excuse for playing gentleman farmer. She, half-Spanish, carried bulk for the family and carried it well. The Andalusian showed in her coy yet open air, in her small, broad hand and foot, in a languorous liquidity of eye. Their son, a well-behaved and pretty youth of twelve, and their daughter, two years older, rode behind them on the back seat. The daughter bore one of those mosaic names with which the mixed race has sprinkled California—Teresa del Vinal Morse. A pretty, delicate tea-rose thing, she stood at an age of divided appre-

ciations. In the informal society of the Santa Lucia colony, she was listening half the time to her elders, taking a shadowy interest in their sayings and opinions; for the rest, she was turning on Theodore, that childish brother, an illuminated understanding.

The Goodyears arrived with a little flourish. Their trap, which she drove herself and which was perhaps a little too English to be useful or appropriate on a Californian road, the straight, tailor lines of her suit—all displayed that kind of quiet, refined ostentation which, very possibly, shrieks as loud to God as the diamond rings on a soiled finger. Mrs. Tiffany, who had met the Morses on the lawn, tripped clear across the rose-border to meet the Goodyears; did it with entire unconsciousness of drawing any distinction. As by right, Mrs. Goodyear appropriated the great green arm-chair under the oak tree, from which throne she radiated a delicate patronage upon the company.

The others followed by twos and threes. Montgomery Lee, fresh-faced English University man, raising prunes on his patrimony of a younger son; the Roach girls, plump Californian old maids, and their pleasant

little Yankee mother; the Ruggleses, a young married couple. Careless farmers, Mr. and Mrs. Ruggles; but they had the good nature which is the virtue of that defect. This, and the common interest in their three plump, mischievous babies, gave them general popularity in the colony.

Within five minutes, the company had followed the law of such middle-aged groups of familiars, and separated by sexes. The men drifted over to the piazza, lit cigars, hoisted their knees, and talked, first, of the prune picking, their trouble with help, the rather bootless effort of a group in San Jose to form a Growers' Association; then of that city where lay their more vital interests.

Goodyear had just been to San Francisco on a flying trip; he brought back fresh gossip: The Bohemian Club had the "Jinks" in rehearsal; a new-discovered poet had written the book; it was to be (so the Sire declared) the greatest in club history.

"As usual," smiled Judge Tiffany.

They were saying about the Pacific Union Club that the Southern Pacific had raised its rates to Southern points. One might have sensed that shadow which hangs always over

commercial California in the sombreness which froze the group at this news. From five minutes of pessimistic discussion, Goodyear led them by a scattered fire of personalities. Billy Darnton was going to give a bull's head breakfast at San Jacinto. Al Hemphill was coming to it all the way from New York. Charlie Bates had pulled out for the new gold diggings in the Mojave desert, rich again in anticipation, although he had to leave San Francisco secretly to escape the process servers.

"Tea, gentlemen!" called Mrs. Tiffany, from her nasturtium bower in the shadow of the great oak.

"Just when we are getting comfortable," her husband growled pleasantly; and he made no move to rise. The women sat at ease about the tea-table. Their talk, beginning with the marvelous Ruggles babies, had run lightly past clothes and help, and fallen into the hands of Mrs. Goodyear. She, too, was full of San Francisco. Apart, under the grape arbor, Teresa Morse and her brother were snaring lizards—playing like two well-behaved babies miraculously grown tall.

"There's Eleanor," suddenly spoke Teresa.

At the word, she dropped her lizard, started forward; and stopped as she came out into full view of the road.

Eleanor, in fresh white, bareheaded under her parasol, was approaching between two young men. The slighter of the two men moved a little apart; the heavier, in whom Mrs. Tiffany recognized with some apprehension the new protegé, Mr. Bertram Chester, walked very close up. He was peering under the parasol, which Eleanor dropped in his direction from time to time without visibly effecting his removal. It seemed from his wide gestures, from the smile which became apparent as he drew nearer, that he was talking ardently.

In the other man, Mrs. Tiffany recognized that Mr. Heath who had the boy friendship with Bertram Chester. He was putting in a word now and then, it appeared. When he spoke, Eleanor turned polite attention upon him; and then resumed her guarded attitude toward that dynamo buzzing at her left. Insensible of the company on the lawn, they passed behind the grape arbor which fringed the gate and which hid them temporarily

from view; and the one-sided conversation became audible.

"It wasn't a *patch* on fights I've had with 'em. Down home, I used to fight steers right along. That's nothing to a nigger who used to work for us in Tulare. He'd jump on their backs and reach over and bite their noses till they hollered quits. Sure thing he did!" It died out as they turned in at the gate and faced the group about the trees.

Mrs. Goodyear made a gesture of an imaginary lorgnette toward her high-bridged nose. Mrs. Tiffany gathered herself and ran over to the gate. It was Mr. Heath—she noticed as she advanced—who was blushing. Bertram Chester stood square on his two feet smiling genially. As for Eleanor, she maintained that sweet inscrutability of face which became, as years and trouble came on, her great and unappreciated personal asset.

Young Chester spoke first:

"I knew Miss Gray was coming down this afternoon—so I laid for her on the road—didn't I, Miss Gray?"

"Very nice of you, I'm sure," murmured Mrs. Tiffany, though she bit her lip before

she spoke—"won't you come over to meet our friends?" Eleanor had darted ahead, to the pats of the women and the adoring hugs of Teresa Morse.

Mrs. Tiffany saw with relief that her disgraced protegé managed his end of the introduction very well, although he did make a slight advance to shake hands with the critical Mrs. Goodyear. He gave no sign to show that he perceived the men over on the piazza. Mr. Heath, his Fidus Achates, cast a slight glance in their direction; then, seeing Bertram settle himself down in an arm-chair and begin at once to address Mrs. Goodyear, he sat down likewise, suffused with an air of young embarrassment. Mrs. Ruggles, seated next to him, began with visible tact the effort to put him at his ease.

Mr. Chester, as he talked to Mrs. Goodyear, looked always toward Eleanor. She, helping Mrs. Tiffany with the tea things, turning a caressing word now and then toward Teresa Morse, might not have noticed, for all her expression showed.

The men came over for tea, were introduced. Mrs. Tiffany, in her foolish anxiety for the manners and appearance of her

protegé, noted that he was at home with men, at least.

Mr. Goodyear, indeed, clutched with his eye at the blue-and-gold button in the lapel of Bertram's coat, at the figure of him, and at the name.

"You aren't Chester who played tackle on the Berkeley Varsity last season?" he asked. An old Harvard oar, Goodyear kept up his interest in athletics.

"Tackle and half," said the youth. "Yes, sir."

"Well, well, I remember you in the game!" said Goodyear.

Mrs. Tiffany, now that her protegé no longer needed watching, had returned to her tea things.

"Eleanor," she called. "Will you run into the house and get that box of chocolate wafers that's over the ice chest?"

"Let me carry 'em for you, Miss Gray," put in Chester, breaking through a college reminiscence of Goodyear's.

Eleanor never flicked an eyelash as she announced:

"I should be very glad."

Mrs. Tiffany, glancing over the group,

noted with comparative relief that none but she, Goodyear, and the young persons involved, had heard this passage.

As they moved toward the house, Bertram opened upon Miss Gray at once.

"This is the second chance I've had alone at you," he said.

"We are rather conspicuous," she burst out.

"Oh, nobody'll mind. A girl always thinks everybody is looking at her. Besides, I wouldn't care if they were. I've wanted to tell you something, and I couldn't with Heath trailing us. You've got awfully nice eyes."

Eleanor seemed to see neither the necessity nor the convenience of an answer.

"But you have!" he persisted. "They're better than pretty. They're nice."

Again Eleanor said nothing. It seemed to her that there was nothing to say.

"I know why you've got it in for me," he burst out. "You have, you know. When I speak to you, you never talk back, and yesterday you wouldn't let me stay after I had corralled the bull. It's because I'm working for your uncle. It's because I'm making a living, not eating what someone else made for me like—" he swept his hand backward to-

ward the company on the lawn—"like those people out there."

Stung, for a second, to a visible emotion, Eleanor raised her grey eyes and regarded him.

"You are assuming a little, aren't you?" said she.

"Then why can't I come to see you sometime in the evening if that isn't so? I don't ask it of many nice girls."

She caught at the delimiting phrase, "nice girls," and glanced up again. By this time, they had passed through the living room; and he had awkwardly opened the door into the kitchen.

"I haven't known you very long," she said.

"There isn't a lot to know about me," he grumbled. Then his face cleared like the sunshine breaking through. "I could teach you to savvey the whole works in an evening."

"There are the chocolate wafers up over the ice-chest—that brown tin box." He reached up and heaved the package down, putting into that simple and easy operation the energy of one lifting a trunk.

Annoyed, and a little amused, Eleanor watched him. All at once, she felt a catch

in her throat, was aware of a vague, uncomprehended fear—fear of him, of her loneliness with him, of something further and greater which she could not understand, did not try to understand. She wanted air; wanted to get away. When he turned about, she stood holding open the kitchen door, her eyes averted.

She felt that he was standing over her; she felt his smile as he looked down.

"You needn't be in such a terrible hurry," he said.

"They'll be waiting for us on the lawn," she forced herself to answer. It required all her energy to keep her voice clear and firm. Then she hurried ahead into the open air. Once in sight of the lawn party, she made herself walk beside him, even smile up at him.

"It's just as I said—" he had gone back to his grumbling voice and his wholly presumptuous manner—"Either you don't like me, or you're sore on me because I'm working for your uncle."

To the great relief of Eleanor, Mrs. Tiffany came out to meet them, took the box from Bertram and accompanied them back to the tea table. For the rest of the afternoon,

Eleanor managed by one device or another to save the situation. When, in the shifting of group and group, she had no one else for protection, Teresa Morse, following her like a dog, ready to come to her side at a glance, played the involuntary chaperone.

Judge Tiffany had no word alone with his wife until the sun slanted low across the orchard and the company broke up. When he met her apart, he said:

"He ought to be a success, that protegé of yours!"

"I have been dreadfully mortified!"

"Oh, not a social success, though that may come too, if he ever perceives the necessity for it. But a general success. Such simple and unturned directness as his ought to win out anywhere. It is more than enchanting. It is magnificent. I'm willing to risk discipline on the place just to study a specimen so unusual. Mattie, this time I am going to assist. I'm going to ask him to supper."

"Edward, are you laughing at me again?"

"For once, my dear, no; not at least on the main line. You'd better ask that Mr. Heath, too."

"And Eleanor?"

The Judge looked across to the oak tree, where Eleanor was ostentatiously tying up the brown braids of Teresa Morse. Bertram, talking athletics with Goodyear, had her under fire of his eyes.

"If any young person was ever capable to make that choice, it is your niece Eleanor," he said. "It might afford study. Yes, ask her, too."

Mr. Chester and Mr. Heath were delighted; though Mr. Chester said that he had an engagement for the evening. ("What engagement except with the cutting-women?" thought Mattie Tiffany.) But Eleanor declined. Some of the chickens were sick; she was afraid that it might be the pip; she doubted if Antonio or Maria would attend to it; she would sup at home. Mrs. Tiffany, anticipating the intention which she saw in Bertram's eyes, made a quick draft on her tact and asked:

"Mr. Chester, would you mind helping me in with the chairs?"

Seated at the supper table, Bertram Chester expanded. The Judge took him in hand at once; led him on into twenty channels of introspective talk. Presently, they were speak-

ing direct to one another, the gulf that separates youth from age, employer from employed, bridged by interest on one side and supreme confidence on the other. This grouping left Mrs. Tiffany free to study Heath. It grew upon her that she had overlooked him and his needs through her interest in the more obvious Chester. She noticed with approval his finished table manners. Mr. Chester, though he understood the proper use of knife and fork and napkin, paid slight attention to "passing things"; Heath, on the contrary, was alert always, and especially to her needs. "He had a careful mother," she thought. Gently, and with a concealed approach, she led him on to his family and his worldly circumstances. He spoke freely and simply, and with a curious frank assumption that anything his people chose to do was right, because they did it. He had come down to the University from Tacoma; his father kept a wagon repair shop. His people had gone too heavily into the land boom, and lost everything.

"I felt that I could work my way through Berkeley or Stanford more easily than through an Eastern college," he said simply.

"And then I shouldn't be so far away from home. Mother likes to see me at least once a year."

He was going home after the apricot picking was over; he felt that in vacation he should earn at least his fare to Washington and back.

"I'm sure she must be a very good mother to deserve that devotion," said Mrs. Tiffany, warming to him.

"She deserves more," he said, a kind of inner glow rising to his white-and-pink boyish face. That same glow,—Mrs. Tiffany might have noticed this and did not—illuminated him whenever, from across the table, Chester's laugh or his energetic crack on a sentence called a forced attention. Mr. Heath deferred always to this louder personality; kept for him the anxious and eager interest of a mother toward her young. Gradually, this interest absorbed both Mr. Heath and Mrs. Tiffany. The table talk became a series of monologues by young Bertram Chester, Judge Tiffany throwing in just enough replies to spur and guide him.

"No, I don't belong to any fraternity," said the confident youth, "don't believe in them.

They plenty beat me for football captain last year too. When I came to college, they didn't want me. After I made the team and got prominent, they began to rush me. Then I didn't want *them.*"

"It might have been easier for Bert if he *had* joined them," said Heath. "They don't like to have their members working at—with their hands; they always find them snap jobs if they are poor and prominent."

"Oh, I don't know," said Bertram. "The barbs elected me business manager of the *Occident* last season—I didn't make the team until I was a Sophomore, you know—and that more than paid my way. This year I've got a billiard hall with Sandy McCusick.

"He used to be a trainer for the track team," explained Bertram. "I steer him custom and he runs it. Ought to get me through next year over and above. That's one reason I'm picking fruit and resting my mind this summer instead of hustling for money in the city."

"And then?" asked the Judge.

"Law, I guess."

"I am an attorney myself."

"I guess I know that!"

"What school have you chosen?"

"None, I guess. I don't want to afford the time. Yes, I know you want good preparation, but I'd rather be preparing in an office, making a little and keeping my eye open for chances. I may find, before my three years are up, that it isn't law I want, but business."

"I 'm not a college man myself," said the Judge, "I got my education by reading nights on the farm, and pounded out what law I knew in an office at Virginia City. One didn't need a great deal of law to practice in Comstock days—more nerve and mining sense. But I've regretted always that I didn't have a more thorough preparation. Still, every man to his own way. This may be best for you."

"That's what I think," said Bertram Chester. "When I got through High School in Tulare, Dad said, 'Unless you want to stay on the ranch, you'd better foot it for college.' I didn't want to ranch it, and I saw that college must be the best place for a start. Dad put up for the first year. I might have stretched it out to cover a little of my Sophomore year if I'd been careful. I was a pretty fresh Freshman," he added.

"And your mother?" asked Mrs. Tiffany. "I suppose she was crazy for you to go."

"Yes, I suppose she would have been. She's been dead ten years. How hard is it to get into a law office in San Francisco?" he added, shifting.

Judge Tiffany met the direct hint with a direct parry.

"We have five thousand attorneys in San Francisco and only five hundred of them are making a living."

"Yes, I know it is overcrowded," said Bertram Chester, not a particle abashed.

After black coffee on the piazza, the two college boys swung off down the lane, Bertram smoking rapidly at one of the Judge's cigars.

"He can be almost anything," said the Judge, meditatively.

"Even a gentleman?" gently inquired Mrs. Tiffany.

"Perhaps that isn't necessary in our Western way of life. Thank God, we haven't come yet to the point where the caste of Vere de Vere is necessary to us."

"I wish I had it," he went on, a little wistfully.

"Gentility? why Edward, if anyone—"

"Oh no, my dear. I may say that was half the trouble. So many considerations came up; so many things I didn't want to do, so many it didn't seem right to do. I was forever turning aside to wrestle with my feelings on those things, and forever hesitating. Half the time, after the opportunity was gone by, I discovered that my scruples had been foolish; but I always discovered afterward. I don't believe that success lies that way in a new world."

He had risen; and now his wife rose and stood beside him.

"You are forever talking as though you were a failure. I know you're not. Everyone knows you're not."

"The parable of the ten talents, Mattie. Not how much we've got, but how much interest we've earned on our powers. However, we had that out long ago, my dear. Yes, I know. I promised not to talk and think this way. But if I'd been like this boy! He'll seize the thing before him. No side considerations in his mind!"

"It is a policy," said Mrs. Tiffany in a tone

of injured partisanship, "that will land him in jail."

"No," said the Judge, "success does not lead towards jails. He'll look out for that."

CHAPTER III

IN that immortal "middle period" of San-Francisco, when the gay mining camp was building toward a stable adjustment of society, when the wild, the merry, the dissolute and the brave who built the city were settling down to found houses and cultivate respectability in face of a constantly resurgent past—in those days none who pretended to eminence in the city but knew the sisters Sturtevant. Members of that aristocracy which dwelt on Rincon Hill, their names and fames quite eclipsed those of their quiet, self-effacing parents. Although they never called it that, their establishment amounted to a salon. Also, they never called their circle Bohemian, yet it was tinged with an easy view on the conventionalities, a leaning toward art and the things of art, which meant Bohemia in the time when that word was of good repute. Spain, perpetual spring, the flare of adventure in the blood, the impulse of men who packed

Virgil with their bean-bags on the Overland journey, conspired already to make San Francisco a city of artists. She had developed her two poets, singers whose notes had sounded round the world; the painters had followed. The stir of a new life in art, a life which was never quite to reach fulfilment, blew in the bay air.

Centre for those awakening young painters, those minor poets who carried in weaker hands the torches of the two giant pioneers, was the house of the Sturtevant sisters, the one a wit, the other a beauty. Heaven was not grudging with gifts to these two. Alice, the wit, had also a hidden kind of beauty which was not to be taken in on first sight, but which, perceived by the painters of that set, made some of them swear that she was the real beauty of the two. Matilda, the beauty, had if not wit a sprightly feminine fancy. Then, too, her gentleness of judgment, her sweetness of intention, and her illogic of loyalty, gave her point of view a humorous quality. Her circle, confident in her good-nature, was forever leading her on, by this device or that, to exhibit what John Stallard, the novelist, called her "comedy of charity." O'Ryan, that great,

glowing failure whose name will outlive the fame of the successful in San Francisco, used to play ingenious jokes upon it. O'Ryan was possibly the only man of any time who could draw the sting of a practical joke.

They dwelt, twin-regnant over this world of theirs, in sisterly harmony. Stallard declared always that a final gift of fate and the gods preserved them to harmony: their tastes in men differed. They had choice enough, God wot—poets and novelists struggling on the verge of fame; attractive, irresponsible, magnetic journalists, destined never to arrive anywhere, but following a flowery path along which a woman might smile; sons of new-rich millionaires who followed and backed and corrupted the artists of that budding Paris which never blossomed; two painters, among many, who got both fame and wealth before they were done.

In his later years, one asked Tyson the English novelist, connoisseur of women if there ever was one, whom he esteemed the prettiest and whom the wittiest among the women he had known and studied.

"For wit, Lady Vera Loudon," he said, "and after her, a quite remarkable woman I met

in San Francisco out on the West Coast of America—of all places." Tradition has enlarged this reply to make Matilda Sturtevant his prettiest as Alice was his wittiest.

Matilda's fresh beauty of the devil, her full yet delicate beauty of the twenties and early thirties, live in the galleries of Europe. The painters all had their try at her; she lived in creation which ran the line between miniatures and heroic canvases. Lars Wark, perhaps the least considered of all her painter friends, is the one that triumphed most of all. Who does not know his Launcelot and Enid? The Enid, of a beauty so intelligent, so wistful and so good—she is Matilda Sturtevant, hardly idealized.

These twin graces married within two years of each other. Of course, they chose strangely. Matilda, whose beauty might have graced the head of the table in any one of three gaudy mansions on Nob Hill, chose Edward C. Tiffany, attorney, politician in a small but honorable way, man about town—and much older than she. Alice, following quietly, accepted Billy Gray, journalist—a clever reporter with no possibilities beyond that; a gentleman, it is true, and a man of likeable disposition, but

on the whole the least desirable of all her followers.

Billy and Alice Gray lived out the three years which were all they ever had of matrimony, in a Latin quarter garret, transformed into a studio. The intellectual centre of San Francisco shifted to that garret; the gay, the witty and the brilliant still followed wherever Alice Gray might go. Billy, a type of the journalist in the time when journalism meant the careless life, left her a great deal alone after the honeymoon. On his side, there was no conscious neglect in this; on her side, there was no reproach. It was just their way of living. He adored her with a quiet, steady flame of affection which was too fine to degenerate into mere uxoriousness. Already, he was a little too fond of his liquor—a peccadillo which attracted little attention in that age of the careless city. This troubled Alice Gray less than it would have troubled her mother. In the periods when she pulled herself up, she worried to think how little she did care about it. In fact, his remorseful recovery from his debauches had become her occasion for pouring out upon him the mother in her. She rev-

eled guiltily in this singular sacrament of her singular love.

After three years Alice Gray gave birth to a daughter—and died within a fortnight afterward. In all truth, I may say that life, for Billy Gray, ended that day. To lose this tenth muse—I can think of nothing more complete in tragedy except the loss of her father of Marjorie Fleming. And he, like Marjorie Fleming's father, spoke her name no more—until near the end. When after twenty years, his own time came, Stallard, LeBrun the poet and Lars Wark gathered to pay him their last respects. LeBrun came all the way from New Orleans, and Stallard delayed his journey to the South Seas. They had drifted away from him, such had become his ways and habits; they came back in honor of the woman who illuminated their youth. So long and so powerful was the influence of her who never wrote a line except in air and memory.

Billy Gray went on living for the sake of his daughter; but he lived like a man driven of the furies. He became one of those restless, wandering journalists whose virtue to their newspapers is their utter abandonment

of courage and enterprise, whose defect is their love of drink.

Eleanor, they called the baby—Alice had chosen that name "in case it is a girl." Mrs. Tiffany, childless herself, played second mother during the first three years of Eleanor's healthy and contented little life. Perceiving the growth of bad habits in that broken brother-in-law, strong and generous enough to face her perceptions, she called him back from a desk in Los Angeles, where, gossip said, he was drinking himself to death, and gave him over his daughter to keep. From that time on, during a succession of removes which took him from Vancouver on the north to Los Angeles on the south, Billy Gray had establishment after establishment, housekeeper after housekeeper for this daughter. Her face and ways, the dim shadowing of her mother's, were the only hold on reality which he kept.

She grew up a rather grave little thing, hardly pretty at all until she turned fifteen, when she showed signs that the beauty of her aunt, if not the wit of her mother, might live again in her. Of wit, it seemed, she had little; neither did she show any great talents in her irregular schooling. Her longest term

at any one school was three years with the Franciscan Sisters in Santa Barbara. They, Spanish gentlewomen mainly, are the arbiters and conservators of old fashioned manners on the West Coast. Of them it is said, as it is said of certain sisterhoods in France, that one may know their graduates by the way they keep their combs and brushes. In two years Eleanor absorbed something of their grave gentility from these Spanish women. Little else she got from that education, seeing that she was a Protestant and studied neither catechism nor church doctrine. She did, indeed, totter once on the brink of Rome—even dared speak to her father about it. He accepted the situation so carelessly and gave his assent so easily that she was a little hurt. But the next day, he quizzed her about the church and its doctrines. Like a good lawyer, he slipped in the crucial question of his cross-examination between two blind ones.

"All who die outside of the church go to Hell, don't they?" he asked.

"Sister Sulpicia says so."

"Then your grandmother" (Mrs. Sturtevant had just died) "is in Hell?"

He pursued the line no further; he never

needed to; and after a time the storm of doctrine died down in her. That phase of life left another effect on her beside her manners —a mark common enough among Protestant women reared in the shadow of the Catholic Church. Outside its pale by belief, she clung to a few of its sacramentals for pet superstitions, and to a few of its observances for her consolation in trouble and her expression in happiness.

She was sixteen, and about to graduate from a Seminary in Oakland, when her call came to her. In one moment, the secret of her father's long absence became plain; and her whole way of life changed.

Billy Gray had drifted back to the city of his beginnings and happiness; was writing hack editorials and paragraphs for the little weeklies which so infested San Francisco. She knew that their fortunes were low, that only her inheritance, left in trust by her grandparents, kept them moving. Also, a dim suspicion which she had held of her father for years was taking shape in her mind—too young that mind, yet, for any very strong belief in human conduct not written in the tables of the law or in the Etiquette Book.

The current which fused these amorphic thoughts was generated in the most commonplace manner. By custom, she went to the seminary on Monday morning, staying there until Friday evening. It happened that the death of a teacher made Friday an unexpected holiday. Returning on Thursday afternoon, she found the house locked. She remembered that this was "make-up day" at the weekly which took most of her father's work; he must be in the office. She hesitated, wondering whether to telephone for the key; decided to walk down town, since it was a beaming, windless afternoon.

She came about a corner of Montgomery Street, turned in toward the office of *The Whale,* and ran into the environs of a gathering city crowd. The men were straining over backs and shoulders to see; the women were pressing their hands convulsively to their faces with pity and disgust.

"What's the answer?" some one called from the fringe.

"A drunk," came a voice from within, "plain drunk." The police arrived just then, and cleared a way; through the rift they made, she saw them lift—Billy Gray, her father.

In the limpness and horror of this, her first crisis, she did nothing, said nothing; only stood there. Presently, she was aware that a workman in soiled overalls had joined the policemen.

"Now that's all right," he was saying, "he's only dead to the world, making no trouble for nobody. He works for *The Whale* up above; what's the good to pinch him?" *"The Whale?"* asked one of the policemen; and hesitated on the word. In quick decision, then, he whirled upon the crowd, pushed it back, cleared a space. The other policeman and the man in the soiled overalls—he was foreman of *The Whale*—picked up Billy Gray, who was turning and mumbling feebly, and started to carry him upstairs. A sudden impulse of her limbs, an instinct independent of her will, drew her toward them. The policeman, clearing away the crowd, laid hand upon her.

"You'll have to get back little girl!" he said.

She looked him in the eye; the sudden abandonment to her shame seemed to lift and to exalt her; afterward, shuddering over that day, she still remembered a certain perverse pleasure in this moment. And she spoke loud, so loud that all the crowd might hear.

"He is my father!"

The policeman gave way; she hurried up the stairs. The bearers of Billy Gray were resting on the top of the first flight. They had braced him up against the banisters and were trying to rub sense back into him. She addressed herself straight to the foreman.

"Does this happen often?" she asked.

A good natured and communicative person, he was also enough touched by his importance as Good Samaritan to answer the question of a stray little girl.

"Lord yes!" he replied. "Every pay day nowadays. Used to be the brightest man in the business, too."

Then as she stood there, blown by all the strong cross-winds of the world, Marshall the editor, who knew Eleanor, came hurrying down the stairs. He saw that wreckage, grown familiar now to them all, saw the girl standing white of face beside the balustrade; the situation came over him at once. He opened the door, drew in both the intoxicated Billy Gray and his daughter. Half an hour later, when Billy could walk a little—it was a dead, nerveless intoxication with him nowadays—Eleanor and the foreman took him home in a cab.

In that long day and night, Eleanor strung together a thousand half-forgotten incidents, neglects and irregularities of life, and perceived the truth which her whole world had been in conspiracy to keep from her. Out of the cross-blowing impulses of an immaturity which was still half childhood—self pity, shame, heroic pride in her own tragedy, passionate hatreds of a world which harbors such things—she came to a resolve in whose very completeness she was happy for a time. When, before breakfast, she burst into Mattie Tiffany's boudoir, she had a saintly radiance in her face. The elder woman, advised by the first words that Eleanor knew, took the little, cold body into bed with her, petted her back to something like calm. Storm followed the calm; Eleanor went all to pieces in a burst of passionate crying.

After she had recovered a little, her purpose came out of her. Considering her years, she said it all quite simply and undramatically. It was her business to be with her father. Her mother would have wished it so. She was going to leave school. That was her work.

Mattie Tiffany, with her passion for picturesque philanthropies, knew right well that

she had neglected somewhat the plain, unpicturesque philanthropy which lay close to her hand. She had neither the heart nor the conscience to deny Eleanor this sacrifice. In that hour, there grew up between the childless aunt and the motherless niece an understanding which those three years of first infancy, when Eleanor had lain on her breast like a daughter, had never brought at all.

In three months more, during which time Billy Gray reformed, lapsed, reformed, lapsed again, the wiser head of Judge Tiffany found the way. The Sturtevant estate, nearly fifty thousand dollars in all, lay in his hands as trustee. Upon Eleanor's majority, it was to be divided, one third accruing to her, the surviving grandchild, and two-thirds to Mattie Tiffany.

Of late, Judge Tiffany had been turning his mind toward the Santa Clara Valley fruit farms, and especially toward the Santa Lucia tract. He had made the struggle with his own world and lost; that is another story. At sixty-eight, life held little for him except an easy descent into the grave after a career in which he had played only too little. That leisurely style of farming, which would permit him to

keep an eye on his dwindling law practice, attracted him. And nothing, it seemed to him, would better further the intention, now awakened in all of them, to do something for Billy Gray. He bought, therefore, two tracts, already planted and bearing in diversified fruits; one of forty acres, with a little cottage home, for Eleanor; the other of eighty acres, with a large bungalow, for himself.

So far as his intentions toward Billy Gray went, Judge Tiffany made this venture with little hope. Billy Gray had tried the Keeley Cure twice. After each course of treatment, he had "beaten it," although he must gargle whisky, through a deadly sickness, in order to get back into the habit again. His was that variety of drunkenness which is not only an unnatural thirst, but also a mania to forget. There on the Santa Lucia tract, Billy Gray, sure of a living, might tilt at happiness and success with that independent writing which is the chimera of all newspaper men until the end of their days; and Eleanor might help him make the fight.

The next four years—they were a monotony of variety. For her broken, incompetent father, Eleanor learned the art and practice of

growing apricots and prunes. Lady of her small manor, she made a business of it; got it to pay after the second year. Billy Gray never reformed; no one but Eleanor ever expected that he would. He smuggled whisky in; he stole away to get it; once he led the Judge and Eleanor a chase through his old haunts in San Francisco until they found him, broken all to pieces, in the county hospital.

That incident—it appeared that he had been beaten by a squad of drunken soldiers from the Presidio—was the breaking strain. His constitution gone, his mind and body weakened. For twenty years, no one had ever heard him speak the name of that Saxon Alice whose death was the death of his soul. Now, he began suddenly to babble to his daughter of her mother. In his last delirium, he called her "Alice."

When he was dead and buried, Eleanor went on for a year through her accustomed routine of the ranch, letting life flow in again. Tired at twenty-two, she overstated the feeling to herself after the manner of youth, and thought that heart and sense and feeling were dead in her.

In all the years of passage from girlhood to

womanhood, she had lived alone with that dipsomaniac, seeing only such society as frequented her aunt's lawn, and little of that. Books, and such training in life as they give, she had known; but she had never known a flirtation, a follower or a lover. On the day when Bertram Chester went with her to tame the bull, she was as one who steps from the door of a convent.

CHAPTER IV

AS she left the Tiffany gate and emerged into the main road between Santa Clara and Los Gatos, Eleanor raised her serviceable khaki-brown parasol. She was walking directly toward the setting sun, which poured into her eyes; yet she dropped the sunshade behind her head as though to shield herself against an approach from the rear. No one followed; she had walked to the next fence corner before she assured herself of that, dared to shift that feminine buckler against the eye of the sun, to slacken her pace, and to muse on an afternoon whose events, so quiet, so undramatic, and yet so profoundly significant, buzzed still in her head. As she thought on them, other things came into her mind as momentous and worthy of attention before the jump of the great event—that moment alone with Bertram Chester, that panic of unaccountable fear. Slow to anger as much by a native and hidden sweetness as by that sur-

face control which puzzled her demonstrative Aunt Matilda, she surprised her cheeks burning and her blood beating in her throat.

With this physical agitation came an army of disagreeable and disturbing thoughts. At first they were only recollections of irritations past; the tiny maladjustments of her life; things by which she owed vengeance of slight wrongs. They came together at length, into one great, sore grievance—the forwardness, the utter, mortifying impudence, of Mr. Chester. It was long before she admitted this as a cause of irritation; once admitted, it overshadowed all her other complaints against life.

Timidly, she approached stage by stage that scene on the lawn, that unaccountable moment in the kitchen. Again she saw his great shoulders heave with unnecessary strength at the ridiculous cracker box; again she caught the sense of confinement with a machine of crushing strength and power. It seemed to her that her retina still danced with the impression of him as he turned to face her, as he flashed upon her like a drawn weapon. She found herself looking down at the dusty road; suddenly she grew so sick and faint that the breath deserted her body and she had to lean

against the gate post for support. The touch of it against her body revived her with a start, and brought to her mind the extent and folly of her own imaginings. She pulled herself together and dropped her parasol to shield her face from Maria, who was hurrying over from the kitchen garden.

Life flowed in immediately. A hundred details of a household, of a fruit farm in the picking season, awaited her attention. Her orchard and the Tiffany orchard were conducted together on a kind of a loose co-operative system devised by the Judge to give her the greatest amount of freedom with just as much responsibility as would be good for her. Foreseeing that Alice Sturtevant's daughter would never live on a farm indefinitely, that marriage or her own kind would claim her in the end, he arranged everything so that her oversight might pass on short notice to Olsen or to himself. In this harvest season, for example, he secured for both farms the cutters and pickers—the hardest problem for the Californian farmer. Also, the fruit went to his own sheds and yards for cutting and drying. He was among the sturdy minority who stood

out against the co-operative driers which had absorbed most of the fruit crop in the Santa Clara Valley. The detail work about her place—such as setting out the fruit boxes, selecting the moment when apricots or pears were ripe for the picking, seeing that the trees, her permanent investment, were not injured by wagon or picker, keeping her own accounts in balance with those of Judge Tiffany—these and a hundred other little things she did herself and did them well. Especially was the up-keep of the orchard her special care; and this she managed with such native mother-sense that one learned in trees might have told just when he crossed the unfenced line from the Gray orchard to the Tiffany orchard.

To-night, Olsen was waiting to know whether she thought that the ten rows of Moor Parks were ready for picking; he had just finished the first crop of the Judge's Royals and a small gang would be without pressing work on Monday morning. So they walked over the orchard together, pressing a golden ball here and there, and decided that the fruit was ripe and ready. Eleanor summoned Antonio for directions about boxes and ladders. The hen-house had to be inspected, for El-

eanor was fumigating against the pip, brought into the Santa Lucia by an importation of fancy Eastern chickens. To-morrow's menu of the housekeeper was to be looked after. The things kept her busy until her solitary Sunday evening supper.

Eleanor had dined alone so much that she had quite recovered from any self-pity on that score. Like the daughter of convent manners that she was, she kept up her self-respect by a little ceremony at this meal. She dressed for it usually; at least she put on fresh ribbons and flowers, gave a touch here and there to the table, held Maria to the refinements of service.

However, as she opened her napkin that evening the rush and emotional strain of the day brought a certain flash of introspection. It came first when she lifted her eyes and caught sight of herself in the mirror—dewy eyed, fresh, a pink rose in her hair, a pink ribbon at her throat. What was she, so young, so feminine, doing there, supping alone in state? She remembered the invitation of Lars Wark in Munich; he and his wife, living the life artistic away over there, had sent to ask her that she visit them and share their winter in the studio or their summer on the coast of Brit-

tany. Why, in the face of that alluring invitation, did she suffer her soul to keep her in such prisons as this? She could afford it; there was no question of money. According to the books she had read, that solitary state belonged to old, disappointed bachelors, old maids, faded people generally. Here she sat, a picture unseen, playing at age—and she less than twenty-two. There was a kind of delicate incongruity about it all. And watching her own grey eyes, as they faced her in the mirror, she half comprehended why she continued to live so, even after her father died and took away the reason for her old solitude. She had been under the hypnotic suggestion of an event, an impression. That moment on Montgomery street, when she found her father lying drunk, when tragedy and responsibility came together—that moment had stretched itself out to six years. She had lived by it; was living by it now.

In some unaccountable fashion, that picture would intertwine itself with the impression, so new and vivid, which she had received that afternoon. Momentarily, both united to produce one emotion—profound disgust and dislike for the coarseness, the brutality, of male

humanity, which had laid her father out on the pavement for the sport of a mob, which had made this perturbing young man trample on all considerations and delicacies.

"You need not mind about dessert, Maria," she called out suddenly. She rose, hurried out of doors, tore into the inspection of fruit crates for to-morrow's picking.

Night, falling with little twilight, as always in those climes, found her still ranging the house and barnyard, the rose incongruously in her hair, the ribbon at her throat. When it was too dark to find employment out of doors, she hurried back to the house, tried to read. But a sense of confinement drove her forth. She started out toward the road, stopped by the hedge gate, sat down finally on a bench under her grape arbor. The leaves and the bunches of swelling fruit hid her from sight of the highway, overshadowed at that point by a great bay tree.

A confusion of voices, masculine and feminine, sounded in the distance. She caught a shrill, rowdy laugh. "The cutting-women and their men," she thought dimly. That social phenomenon of the picking season, grown accustomed by six years of passing sum-

mers and winters, drew no special attention from her. But the noise continued; it became plain that these reveling laborers were making in her direction. Doubtless, they came from the women's camp at Judge Tiffany's. The night was bringing her peace and sleep of the soul after a disturbing day; alone, that raucous noise marred the calm.

She peered idly through the leaves. A half a dozen women, their white dresses making them visible in the dusk, a few men whose forms loomed indistinctly against the edge of the sky, noised past her and were gone down the road. One couple, she perceived, lingered behind. They had reached the shade of the bay tree, were so close that she might have reached out and touched them, before she realized the situation. She was about to call out, to cough, when the man spoke.

"No, I won't hurt you," he said, "I'm as gentle a little kisser as you ever saw." The voice was that of Bert Chester.

"Aw, you're too fresh," came the voice of the girl. But as they drew into deeper shadow, she was not pulling away from him.

"Fresh as a daisy!" said the voice of Bertram

Chester. Followed a struggle, a faint "stop, stop!" in the voice of the girl, the sound of gross and heavy kissing. In a moment, the white form of the girl broke down the road, the greater, darker form of the man lumbering after. He caught her, held her for a longer time and a lesser struggle. She came out of this one laughing, and down the road they went, his arm a black shadow about her waist.

Eleanor's deeper and higher self—the self that lay like a filmy, impalpable wrapper about her conscious mind, so that at times she appeared to herself as two persons—that consciousness stood aloof in expectation of disgust, revulsion, horror. It came as a confused surprise that she felt nothing of the kind. A cloying sweetness, a sensation purely physical, as though a syrup had been poured into all the channels of her nerves, began in her throat, rushed through body and limbs. The sweet tide surged backward, beat in a wave of faintness upon her heart. Shame, like air into a vacuum, followed with a rush. She sank to the ground, clinging to the bench.

When she had so far mastered herself that

she could feel her own senses, she was praying aloud—praying in the rite which held her emotions while it failed with her reason.

"Ave Maria Sanctissima!" she was saying over and over again.

CHAPTER V

"MATCH you to see whether it's good, old fifteen cent feed at the Marseillaise or a four bit bust at the Nevada," said Bertram Chester.

"I'll take you," responded Mark Heath, flipping a silver dollar as he spoke. "Heads the Nevada; tails the croutons and Dago red."

"Tails it is—aw, let's make it the Nevada to show there's nothing in luck."

"You quitter!"

"All right; but I hate to look cabbage soup in the face," grumbled Bertram. He resumed, then, his languid occupation which this parley had interrupted, and continued to review, from an angle of Moe's cigar stand, the passing matinee parade.

The time was late afternoon of a fog-scented October day. Through the wet air, street lamps and electric signs had begun to twinkle. Under the cross-light of retreating day and incandescent globes, the parade of women,

all in bright-colored silks and gauds, moved solid, unbroken. Opera bags marked off those who had really attended the matinees; but only one in five wore this badge of sincerity. The rest had dressed and painted and gone abroad to display themselves just because it was the fashion in their circles so to dress and paint and display. Women of Greek perfection in body and feature, free-stepping Western women who met the gaze of men directly and fearlessly, their costumes ran through all the exaggerations of Parisian mode and tint. Toilettes whose brilliancy would cause heads to turn and necks to crane on the streets of an Eastern city, drew here no tribute of comment. It had gone on all the afternoon. From the Columbia Theatre corner, which formed one boundary of "the line," to the Sutter Street corner of Kearney, five blocks away, certain of these peacocks had been strutting back and forth since two o'clock. The men who corresponded in the social organization to these paraders of vanity lined the sidewalks or lolled in the open-air cigar stands, as did these two young adventurers in life—Bertram Chester, now a year and a half out of college, and Mark Heath, cub reporter on the *Herald*.

When the homefarers from office and factory had begun to tarnish the brilliance of this show, when the women had begun to scatter—this one to dinner with her man, that one back to the hall-room supper by whose economies she saved for her Saturday afternoon vanities—Bertram and Mark drifted with the current up Kearney street toward the Hotel Marseillaise. In their blood, a little whipped already by the two cocktails which they had felt able to afford even while they debated over the price of dinner, ran all the sparkling currents of youth. They drew on past Sutter Street to Adventurer's Lane, the dingy section of that street wherein walked the treasure-farers of all the seven seas; and as they walked, Bertram began to speak of the things which lay close to his heart.

"I guess I'll chuck the law," he said. "Maybe I'll stay with Judge Tiffany a year or so longer—until I get admitted anyway. A bar admission might count if I wanted to go into politics."

"Politics is a pretty poor kind of business," responded Mark Heath. Old enough in journalism to have recovered somewhat from his first enchantment with the rush of life, he was

only just beginning to acquire the cynical pose.

"Hell, it's all according to how you play it," said Bertram. "When you get to be Lincoln, nobody calls it poor business. Do they think any the worse of my old man because he played politics to be sheriff of Tulare? If I should go into the game down there, his pull would help me a lot. But it's me for this." His sweeping gesture took in the whole city.

He had missed Mark's point. The latter felt within him a little recoil from that loyalty for his greater, more ready, more popular friend, which had carried him, a blind slave, through college, and which had helped him make him settle in San Francisco instead of Tacoma. Through his four years at the University, Mark had shared his crusts with Bertram Chester, yelled for him from the bleachers, played his fag at class elections. Now Mark was out in the world, practising the profession of lost illusions; and a new vision had been growing within him for many days. He turned a grave face toward his chum, and his lips opened on the impulse of a criticism. But he thought better of it. His mouth closed without sound.

"The real chances for a lawyer, though, are

in business," Bertram went on. "Judge Tiffany never grabbed half his chances. Attwood in the office, says so."

"He surely didn't keep out of politics, that Judge," said Mark, remembering the turns of fate which had almost—and ever not quite—made the old Judge a congressman, a mayor, and a Justice of the California State Supreme Court.

"Oh, he had no call to be in politics. He hasn't the sand. Attwood says so. And he stuck at his desk and let his business chances go by. Myself, I'm keeping my lamps open. Just because the Judge doesn't watch his chances, that office is a great place to pick things up. Look at those tidewater cases of ours over in Richmond. I know, from the inside, that we're going to lose our case, and lots will go whooping up. I've written to Bob for a thousand dollars to invest. I'll double that in a year and have my first thousand ahead. Say, why don't you try something in business instead of sticking to newspapers? Let's go in together. Reporting is a rotten kind of business."

"Oh, I don't know, I like it. I think I'll stay with it for a while." Again Mark had

put back the thought of his heart. Like so many of the loyal and devoted, he could hardly bring himself to speak of his own deeper motives and ambitions. Least of all could he reveal them in this moment of disillusion. He had never told Bertram about the four-act comedy hidden in the writing desk of their common room, to be mulled over during the mornings of his leisure. "I think I'll stay with it for a while, anyway," he added simply.

They had turned out of Kearney Street and were mounting the hill-rise toward the Hotel Marseillaise. These fringes and environments of Chinatown had been residences for the newly affluent in the days when the Poodle Dog flourished and flaunted in the hull of a wreck, in the days when that Chinatown site was Rialto and Market-place for the overgrown mining camp. The wall moss which blew in with the trade winds, and the semi-tropic growth of old ivies and rose-bushes, had given to these houses the seasoning of two centuries. Unpretentious hovels beside the structures of stone turrets and mill-work fronts by which later millionaires shamed California Street and Van Ness Avenue, they had the simple dignity of a mission, a colonial farm-

house, or any other structure wherein love of craft has supplanted scanty materials. Innumerable additions of sheds and boxes, the increment of their fallen social condition, broke their severe lines. A massive door, a carriage entrance, the remains of a balcony faced to catch wind and air of the great bay, recalled what they had been; as though a washerwoman should wear on her tattered waist some jewel of a wealth long past.

The Hotel Marseillaise occupied one of these houses. Where it stood, the hill rose steep. One might enter a narrow alley, skirt a board fence, dodge into a box hall, seasoned with dinners long past, and mount by a steep staircase to the dining room; or he might enter that dining room directly from the street, such was the slope of the hill. A row of benches parked the front door. On the fine, out-of-doors evenings which came too seldom in the City of Fogs, French waiters out of work, French deserters from merchantmen in the harbor below, French cabmen waiting for night and fares, lolled on these benches while they smoked their black cigarettes and chattered in their heavy, peasant accent.

Within, Madame Loisel ruled with her cash

register at the cigar counter. She, bursting with sweet inner fatness like a California nectarine, kept in her middle age the everlasting charm and chic of the Frenchwoman. This Madame Loisel was a dual personality. She of the grave mouth, the considering eye, the business manner, who rung up dinner fees on the cash register and bargained with the Chinamen for vegetables at the back door, seemed hardly even sister to the Madame Loisel of Saturday afternoon on "the line" or Sunday morning at the French Church. By what process man may not imagine, this second Madame Loisel took six inches from her girth, fifty pounds from her weight, fifteen years from her age. Her step was like a dancer's; her figure was no more than comfortably plump; her Sunday complexion brought the best out of her alluring eyes and her black, ungrizzled hair; her hands, in their perfect gloves, bore no resemblance to the hands which had scraped pots for Louis Loisel in the time before he could flaunt the luxury of a cashier.

In Madame Loisel's background lay the ramblings of a house built for comfort and large hospitalities. Gone were the folding

doors, bare the niches, empty the window-seats. The old drawing-rooms, music-room, dining-room, had become one apartment of a sanded floor and many long tables. Through this background of his wife moved Louis Loisel, grizzled, fat and gay; never too busy at his serving to exchange flamboyant banter with a patron.

Hither the peasant French of San Francisco, menials most of them, came for luncheons and dinners of thick, heavy vegetable soup, coarse fish, boiled joint, third-class fruit and home-made claret, vinted by Louis himself in a hand press during those September days when the Latin quarter ran purple—and all for fifteen cents! Thither, too, came young apprentices of the professions, working at wages to shame a laborer, who had learned how much more one got for his money at Louis's than at the white-tiled American places further down town. It stood for ten years, this Hotel Marseillaise, the hope of the impecunious. How many careers did it preserve, how many old failures from the wreckage of Kearney Street did it console!

Madame Loisel stood at her cash register as the two young men entered. A fresh waist,

a ribbon at her throat, a slimness of her waist and an artificial freshness in her complexion showed that she had been parading that afternoon.

"Bonsoir Madame—la la la-la-la!" called Bertram.

Her face blossomed with coquetry, her teeth gleamed, and:

"Bonsoir—diable!" she smiled back at him. Mark Heath had greeted her more soberly. Her eyes followed Chester's big, square frame as he moved with lumbering grace to a corner table.

There he sat at the beginning of his career, such as it was, this Bertram Chester—a completed piece of work, fresh, unused, from the mills of the gods. His strong frame was beginning to fill out, what with the abandonment of training for a year. He was a pretty figure of a man in his clothes; and those clothes were so woven and cut as to be in contrast with his surroundings. A tailor of San Francisco, building toward fashionable patronage, had made him suits free during his last year in college. Varsity man and public character about the campus, Chester paid him back in advertising of mouth. Guided by

that instinct of vanity and personal display which runs in those who have to do with the cattle range, he had learned to dress well before he was really sure-mouthed in English grammar.

His face, still, as when we first saw him, a little over-heavy, had lightened with the growth of spirit within him. This increase of spirit and expression manifested itself in his rolling and merry eye, which travelled over all humanity in his path with an air of possession, in the mobility of his rather thick-lipped mouth. For the rest, the face was all solidity and strength. His neck rose big and straight from his collar, a sign of the power which infused the figure below; his square chin, in repose, set itself at a most aggressive angle; his nose was low-bridged and straight and solid. From any company which he frequented, an attraction deeper than his obviously regular and animal beauty brought him notice and attention.

The son of Louis, a small, cheerful imitation of his father, slammed a bowl of cabbage soup down before them. Bertram, sighing his young, ravenous satisfaction, sank the ladle deep and stopped, his hand poised, his

eyes fixed. Mark followed the direction of his glance. Louis Loisel, wearing his best air of formal politeness, was bowing a party of women to a table by the door.

"Slummers!" said Mark under his breath. A habitué of the place, he had already developed a resentment of outsiders.

Louis pulled out chairs, wiped the table mightily; the French cabmen, the Barbary Coast flotsam and jetsam, gazed over their soup-spoons in silent, furtive interest.

"It's her!" said Bertram, lapsing into his native speech. Heath flashed a glance of recognition at the same moment.

"Miss Gray—sure—Mrs. Tiffany's niece. I thought she was in Europe—didn't she start a week or two after we left the ranch?"

"Oh, I knew she was coming back. Mrs. Tiffany told me. The Mrs. Boss isn't so sweet on me as she used to be, but I see her in the office now and then."

Bertram resumed his ladling. Both watched furtively. It was a balanced party —three men and three women. Among the men, Mark Heath recognized him of the pointed beard as Masters, the landscape painter. The little, brown woman who sat

with her back to them must be his wife. The other girl, a golden, full-blown Californian thing—her, too, they marked and noted with their eyes.

Recognition of a sort had come meanwhile from the party at the guest table. Miss Waddington, the full-blown golden girl, had seated herself and cooed an appreciative word or two about the quaintness and difference of the Marseillaise, when her eyes clutched at the two young men in the corner, whose dress made them stand out so queerly among the lost and soiled. As Bertram looked up with his glance of recognition, her eyes caught his. She glanced down at her plate.

"Eleanor," she said, "is that a flirtation starting, or do any of us know the two men in the corner—there under that beer sign."

Eleanor looked. Kate Waddington, her indirect gaze still on that corner table, saw the dark young man smile and bow effusively. She slipped a sidling glance at Eleanor Gray. Something curious, an intent look which seemed drawn to conceal a tumult within, had filmed itself over Eleanor's grey eyes. But she spoke steadily.

"Why, yes. I have met them both. They

used to do summer work on the ranch when they were in college. I believe that the darker one—Mr. Chester—is in Uncle Edward's law office now. I haven't seen either of them since I went abroad."

"I should say that this Mr. Chester fancied you, from his expression."

"I suppose that he fancies every girl that he sees—from his expression."

Kate Waddington caught the shade of irritation, uncommon with Eleanor, and noted it in memory. Mrs. Masters, an eager little woman who grasped at everything about her like a child, broke in:

"If you know them, and they're really frequenters of the place, it would be fun to ask them over. Sydney used to dine here a great deal when he was young and poor, and he has *such* stories of the people he used to know then!"

Eleanor hesitated. Kate looked again toward Bertram, who was talking rapidly across his soup to Mark Heath, and:

"Do!" she murmured.

In that instant, Bertram himself cast the die. This had been the debate across the soup:

"I'm going over to speak to her," said Bertram.

"I shouldn't butt in," said Mark. "It's a balanced party."

"Oh, I shan't try to stay—coming along?" He did not wait to see whether or not Mark was following.

Miss Gray greeted him more cordially, altogether more sweetly, than she had ever done in their meetings on the ranch, and passed him about the circle for introductions. Noticing, then, that Mark had not followed, Bertram turned and beckoned with impatience. Mark crossed the room in some embarrassment.

"Is this your first visit to the Hotel Marseillaise?" asked Mrs. Masters. Mark hesitated; but Bertram laughed and beamed down on her from his brown eyes.

"Only about my two hundred and first," he said. "Mr. Heath and I dine here every night we haven't the price to dine anywhere else."

Masters, with that ready tact which he needed in order to live with Mrs. Masters, rushed into the breach.

"And I should call it about my four hundred and first," he said. "It's back to the old

scenes for the night. I haven't tasted real cabbage soup since the last time—it has been a canned imitation. For goodness' sake join us and tell us the news!"

"Do!" said Miss Waddington with animation, and "Please," said those two escorts who do not figure in this story. Eleanor said nothing, but her expression was an invitation.

"Sure!" responded Bertram.

The Hotel Marseillaise had familiar customs of its own. For one thing, guests bothered the waiters as little as possible. Masters smiled when the two unconscious youths went back to their table, picked up the big soup tureen, their knives and forks, their plates, and transported them to the larger table.

They were dragging the lees of a rather squalid Bohemia, these two boys; a Bohemia the more real because they were unconscious in it. Its components were a cheap furnished room, restaurants like this, adventurous companionship in the underworld which thrust itself to the surface here and there in that master-port of the Saxon advance. Not for months had either of them been in the society of such women as these—women who pre-

ferred cleanliness to display, women who were nice about their nails and hair. A kind of pleasant shyness crept over Mark Heath; the spirit came into the face of Bertram Chester. Masters, tactician that he was, put the conversation into their hands. Presently, they were telling freely about the fare at Coffee John's, about their familiars and companions in the little Eddy-Street lodging house, about the drifters of the Latin quarter. They quite eclipsed the pale youth who was playing escort to Eleanor, and the substantial person in the insurance business who seemed to be responsible for Kate Waddington. Heath, speaking with a little diffidence and lack of assurance, had twice the wit, twice the eye for things, twice the illumination of Bertram Chester; yet it was the latter who brought laughter and attention. His personality, which surrounded him like an aroma, his smile, his trick of the eyes—one listened to Bertram Chester.

When the son of Louis brought in the little sweet oranges and arranged the goblets for black coffee, talk shifted from monologue to dialogue. Eleanor found herself talking to

Bertram. A kind of pride had been rising in her all the evening; a pride born in recoil from her latest recollection of him. The episode of that night under the bay tree had gone with her clear across the Atlantic. Even the influence of the wholly new environment, in which she had grown from a girl recluse to a woman, had not served for a long time to erase that ugly stain on her memory. Here and now was the man who served so to perturb her once—and she could look on him, with her more mature eyes, as an attractive, unlicked young cub. She surprised herself taking revenge upon the past by a hidden patronage. At once, then, she fell to talking of Europe and the splendors she had lived there.

"This reminds me of the places one slips into abroad," she said, "Mr. and Mrs. Wark —Lars Wark you know—took me to just such an old ruin in Paris. We dined for thirty centimes, I remember, but it was no better than this. I've had to go away to know my native city. That is the thing which strikes you when you come back—San Francisco is so like the Latin cities of Europe, and yet so unlike!"

Kate leaned across her insurance man.

"The Society for the Narration of European Travel is in session, Mr. Chester," she said. "I know the joy that Eleanor is having. It was the passion of my life after I first got back from abroad."

"Oh, I eat it alive," said Bertram. "I'm strong for seeing Paris." He turned back to Eleanor; and her double embarrassment drove her on.

"Such a good time as I had with the Warks —their studio in Munich, where I met all the German long-haired artists—a run to Paris in the season—the dearest little village on the Coast of Brittany last summer—and three weeks in incomparable London at the end. I haven't thought of the ranch for a year and a half—Uncle Edward pays me the compliment of saying that my profits fell off twenty per cent. under Olsen's management—oh, isn't she a dear!"

For Madame Loisel, wearing a beaming and affable manner, had come through the door and approached their table. Madame made it a point of business honor to promote personal relations with her regular guests, asking Jean how he liked the fish, assuring Jacques that the soup would be better to-mor-

row. This visit of hers to the slumming party came after a storm in the kitchen, whose French thunders had reached the dining room now and then. Louis, the conservative, hated slummers and dreaded being "discovered." He ran a restaurant as a social institution as well as a business venture. Madame Loisel, with her eye on the cash register, longed ardently for slummers who would give large tips to Louis the younger, order expensive wines, and put the Marseillaise on the way to a twenty-five cent table d'hote dinner. From that kitchen squabble, recurrent whenever slummers visited them, Madame Loisel swept in haughty determination, leaving Louis to take it out on the pots. As she approached the table, all the charm of France illuminated her smile.

She invariably paid slummers the compliment of addressing them in French.

"Bonsoir—le souper, plait-il vous?" she asked.

Eleanor took her up in fluent French, and the talk sparkled back and forth between them—reminiscences of this or that restaurant on the boulevards which Madame Loisel had known in her youth and which Eleanor had

visited. Bertram, his mouth open, followed that talk as though summoning all his Sophomore French to match a word here and there. Kate Waddington, leaning again across her insurance man, was the first to break in.

"I myself used to be keen on French when I came back from Europe, but I'm out of practice. Please excuse me, Madame, if I speak English. How can you do it at this price?"

"It is kind of you to say so, Mademoiselle —economy and honesty."

Masters patted Mark Heath on the knee.

"We can't let you fellows go away from us now. One doesn't get guides to the Latin quarter for nothing. Take us somewhere, Mr. Heath—unless you're working to-night."

"No, virtue has been rewarded," said Mr. Heath. "I'm off to-night as a testimonial of esteem from the City Editor. What shall it be?"

Bertram Chester, taking up the talk again, laid out Kearney Street like a bill of fare. Mrs. Masters, casting her vote as chaperone, chose the Marionette Theatre tucked away under the shadow of the Broadway Jail.

As Eleanor stepped out into California

Street, gathering her coat about her against a night which had come up windy and raw, Bertram took her side with a proprietory air. She turned toward her appointed escort. It happened that he was walking ahead with Heath just then, holding an argument about the drift of Montgomery Street when it was the water front. For several blocks, then, Bertram had her alone. It seemed to her that he began just where he left off two years or more ago.

"You're even prettier than you used to be," he said caressingly; "you've bully eyes. I think I told you that before."

This time, she looked him full in the face and smiled easily.

"Have I? Well I hope you don't mind my saying that they're resting on a bonny sight!"

Somewhat taken aback by the directness of this answer, so different from the artificial coyness of the girls he knew best in that period of his life, Bertram turned in his course.

"You're joshing me," he said.

"Truly I'm not. You are good to look at —eyes and all."

Although balked of his opening, Bertram tried again.

"Well your mouth is just as good as your eyes."

The same quick look into his face, and the same smile, as she answered:

"Yours is a little better if anything. It is not only well formed, but it becomes delicious when you smile, and it has most attractive shadows in the corners."

"Suppose we talk sense," grumbled Bertram.

"Suppose we do; I know you can." They both laughed at this, and all the way up Kearney Street she continued her chatter of Europe. Lars Wark, who had known her mother, had done everything for her. It had been very different from the regular tour; she came back ignorant of all the show places from Cologne Cathedral to the Tower. But it had been her privilege to see and meet wonderful people. They would not do for regular companionship, such people. They struck one, in the end, as goblins and trolls; but it had been an experience of a lifetime—while it lasted. The Warks had taken her to places which the tourist never sees—lost villages in the Black Forest, undiscovered corners of London, even.

After a little of this, she drew him on to speak of himself. She had heard news of him, she said, from her uncle, who said that he was doing well and gave promise of a future in the law. How long had he remained on the ranch that summer? This reference put him back into his presumptive mood.

"You went away without giving me a chance to say good-bye," he complained. "I never saw you again after the party on the lawn."

Her tongue ran away with her.

"I saw you, though," she said.

"Where?"

"Oh, at a distance." He caught nothing from her tone, yet a slight change did come into her manner, as though something had been drawn between them. Then her escort fell in on the other side of Eleanor, appropriating her by right and by consent of her attitude.

Now they were in Broadway, skirting the small bake-shops, the dark alleys, all the picture scenes of the Latin quarter. At that very moment, Miss Waddington drew a little apart from the group clustering about Masters and Mark Heath. An Italian baby of three, too late out of bed, stood by a cellar rail sur-

veying them with the liquid fire which was his eyes. Kate Waddington stooped to pat his head. As she raised herself, she was beside Bertram. Nothing more natural than that she should fall in, step by step, beside him. He caught step with her, but he still looked toward Eleanor.

"Wonderful girl, isn't she?" asked Kate.

"She sure is."

"Her mother," said Kate, "had more wit than any other woman in San Francisco—and the men she had!

"I think Eleanor has inherited *that* at any rate," she added after a pause.

They had reached the door of the Marionette Theatre now. Afterward they drank beer at Norman's; and when they broke up, Bertram Chester found himself with three invitations to call.

Kate Waddington spent that night with Eleanor Gray in the Tiffany House on Russian Hill. While they sat before the fireplace, in the half-hour of loosened hair and confidences, Eleanor broke a minute of silence with the inquiry:

"What did you think of him?" An in-

stant after she let slip this impersonal inquiry, she would have given gold to recall it. And if she had any hope that Kate Waddington had missed the point, it died in her when Kate answered in an indifferent tone:

"He? Oh, he seems to me to be a little promiscuous."

CHAPTER VI

THE Tiffany house—I spare you full description—rambled with many a balcony and addition over that hill which rose like a citadel above San Francisco. From its Southern windows, one looked clean over the city, lying outspread below. Even the Call building, highest eminence piled up by man in that vista, presented its roof to the eye. I can picture that site no better than by this; Over Judge Tiffany's front wall hung an apple tree, gnarled, convoluted, by the buffets of the sea wind. In autumn, when the fruit was ripe, stray apples from this tree had been seen to tumble from the wall and roll four blocks down into the Latin quarter.

From the rear, the house looked out on a hedged and sloping garden, quite old, as gardens go in that land, for a pioneer planted it; and from the rear gate of that garden it was only a step to the hill mount. Thence one came out suddenly to the panorama of the

Bay, stretching on three sides; a panorama divided, as by the false panels of a mural landscape, into three equal marvels. To left, the narrow gate, a surge like the rush of a river always in its teeth and the bright ocean, colored like smelt-scales, beyond. In front the Roads, where all strange crafts from the mysterious Pacific anchored while they waited their turns at the docks. Both in foreground and background, this panel changed day by day. It might be whalers from the Arctic which lay there in the morning, their oils making noisome the breeze; it might be a fleet of beaten, battered tramp wind-jammers, panting after their fight about the Horn; it might be brigs from the South Seas; it might be Pacific steamers, Benicia scow-schooners, Italian fishing smacks, Chinese junks—it might be any and all of these together. As for the background, that changed not every day but every hour what with the shifts of wind, tide and mists. Now its tinge was a green-gold betraying pollution of those mountain placers which fed the San Joaquin and the mighty Sacramento. Now it was blue and ruffled, now black and calm, now slate-gray,—a mysterious shade this last, so that when the

fog began to shoot lances across the waters, these fleets at anchor by Quarantine wharf seemed argosies of fairy adventure. Even Tamalpais, the gentle mountain which rose beyond everything, changed ever with the change in her veil of mist or fog or rain-rift. The third panel, lying far to the right, showed first dim mountain ranges and the mouths of mighty rivers, and then, nearer by, masts, stacks and shipping, fringing the city roofs.

North into this garden ran a small wing of the Tiffany house. Upon the death of Alice Gray, Mattie Tiffany had set it apart for Eleanor the baby. When, after her years with Billy Gray, Eleanor came back, Mattie had refurnished it for the grown baby. The upper story held her bedroom and her closets. Below was her own particular living-room. This opened by a vine-bordered door into the garden, into that path which led up to the bay view.

Judge Tiffany, sitting within the front window to watch the shimmer of a pleasant Sunday afternoon on the city roofs below, perceived that his wife had walked three times to that garden wall which looked down along

the drop of Broadway to the Spanish Church.

The second time that he perceived this phenomenon, his eyes showed interest; the third he smiled with inner satisfaction and rose to meet her return as though by accident. He was leaning upon a cane, getting ease of the sciatica which plagued him.

The Judge had aged during the two years since he opened these events. He had settled now into the worldly state of a man who rests content with the warming sun and the bright air which feed life. But the inner soul, whose depth was his philosophy, whose surface his whimsical humor—that still burned in his dark blue eyes. Those eyes glistened a little as he went on to this, his daily sport.

He met her on the piazza. She had raked the rise of Broadway, which one mounted by two blocks of hen-coop sidewalks; and now she was inspecting the cross street.

"All the Sherlock Holmes in me," said Judge Tiffany, "tells me that Miss Eleanor Gray is going to have a caller, and that Mrs. Edward C. Tiffany is in a state of vicarious perturbation.

"Further," continued Judge Tiffany, dropping his hand upon her arm with that af-

fectionate gesture which drew all sting his words might have carried, "this is no common caller. For that young civil engineer and Mr. Perham the painter and Ned Greene, Mrs. Tiffany never blushes; but these new attentions to her niece—well, I hope my approach drew as much blood from her heart to her countenance twenty-five years ago!"

"I—I *am* perturbed," said Mattie Tiffany. Running rose-bushes, just leafing out into their fall greenery, overgrew the pillars beside her. These she fell to pruning with her hands, so that she turned away her face.

"I see that discipline is relaxing in this family," said Judge Tiffany. "Dear, dear, after managing a wife bravely and well for a quarter century, to fail in one's age! Mattie, he works in my office, this blush-compelling caller; and I told you when I gave him the position not to take him up socially for the present!"

"But what was I to do when he telephoned to Eleanor and asked her?" Mrs. Tiffany turned her head with a turn of her thought. "Did you hear him telephone—was that how you knew?"

"I'd lose all hold on discipline if I revealed my methods."

Judge Tiffany settled himself in an armchair as one prepared to make it a long session. "Let's begin at the start. How came he to renew his acquaintance with Eleanor, and when, and where—and how much had Mattie Tiffany to do with bringing them together again?"

"Not a thing—truly Edward! Some of Eleanor's slumming with Kate Waddington and the Masters—they met by accident at a restaurant—Eleanor asked him. You remember he was taken with her that afternoon just before she went to Europe—the time he mortified me so dreadfully."

"And the time he attracted my attention," said Judge Tiffany. "And now behold that youth, who will always get what he wants by frontal attack, reading my California cases and wearing out my desk with his feet."

"Do you think he will make a good lawyer?" asked Mattie Tiffany. She turned full around at this, and the glance she threw into her husband's face showed more than a casual matchmaker's interest.

"He'll make a good something," said the

Judge. "So far as anyone can judge the race from the start. But that isn't why I have him in the office. You know how little I care in these days for such practice as I have left. I tell myself, of course, that it is my lingering interest in life as a general proposition which made me do it—I am curious to see before I die how this find of yours is coming out. That is what I tell myself. Probably in my very inside heart I know that it's something else."

"What else?" asked Mattie.

"This is one of the hidden things which this experiment is to discover," said Judge Tiffany. "What made me notice him in the first place? What made you invite him to tea on the lawn? What has made you and me and Eleanor remember this chance meeting so long—let me see—how long was it?"

"A year ago last June," said Mattie. One of her functions in their partnership was to hold small details always ready to the hand of the wide-thinking Judge.

"Will he go back on me—that's the question," pursued the Judge. "Success is probably at the end for him, but he has two ways of success open. He may go slowly and well,

or fast and ill. Road number one: he stays with my moth-eaten old practice, he refurbishes it, he earns a partnership; and so to conservative clients and, probably, to genuine success." He hesitated.

"And the other road?" asked Mrs. Tiffany.

"Oh, that has many by-paths. He is trying one of them already. The stealthy, invaluable Attwood has told me about it. This Mr. Chester has made an investment in Richmond lots on information which he had no right to use. Never mind the details. If he follows that general direction, it will be a flashy success, a pretty worm-eaten crown of laurels."

"Like Northrup's," broke in Mrs. Tiffany. That name always jarred on their ears. Northrup, ex-congressman, flowery Western orator, all Christian love on the surface, all guile beneath—he had taken to himself that success which Judge Tiffany might have had but for his hesitations of conscience. Theirs was a secret resentment. Judge Tiffany's pride would never have let him show the world one glimmer of what he felt.

"Suppose he should follow that path—and take up with Northrup," went on Judge Tiffany. "Mine honorable opponent has use for

such young men as our Mr. Chester will prove himself if he follows that path—magnetic young men to coax the rabble, young men not too nice on moral questions. Well, a boy isn't born with honor, any more than he's born with courage; he grows to it. And God only knows just when the boy strikes the divide which will turn his course one way or the other."

"But Edward, you ought to warn him!"

"In the first place, it would do no good to warn one of his age and temperament. In the second place, it would spoil the experiment—but I had commanded you to talk, and here I am doing it all. How looked she; what said he?"

"To-day—just before church—I was hooking up Kate and Eleanor, and he telephoned."

"Instinct, of course, informing you that it was none other than he at the other end of the wire?" On another tongue and in another fashion of speech, this sentence might have been offensive; between them, it was a part of his perpetual game with her amiable weaknesses.

"If I did listen, it was no more than right.

It was what a mother would have done by Eleanor. I heard her say, 'Good morning Mr. Chester,' not at all as though she were surprised to have him call up; and I was really quite disturbed. You had told me not to invite him here for the present; and I hadn't the slightest reason for knowing that Eleanor had seen him since she came back from abroad. Her speaking so familiarly—well, I wondered. But Kate—"

"Oh, she was listening too?"

"Well, I know that she hadn't the excuse for listening that I had; but I had stopped hooking her up, and it was only natural that she should listen too. Eleanor said, 'Certainly I shall be in,' and Kate said, 'That's the old friend we met with Mr. Masters last night in the Hotel Marseillaise. He is prompt!' Rather sharp in Kate, considering what Eleanor has been doing for her!

"You'd have thought Eleanor had eaten the canary bird when she came back. Of course, she knew we had been listening. I wish she hadn't. I'd have liked to see whether she'd have told us then, or waited for him to surprise us. Kate was sharp again. I wonder

if she isn't envious at bottom? After all Eleanor is so much more a lady! Kate said again, 'The young man is prompt!' "

Judge Tiffany laughed.

"Oh, that women could dwell together in peace and harmony! Can't you grant my playmate Miss Waddington a feminine jab or two?"

"Well, she *is* nice to you!"

"Did it never occur to you as a virtue in her that she puts herself out to entertain—even, Madame, I flatter myself to fancy—a withered old codger like me!"

Mrs. Tiffany's first expression flooded her eyes and said, "Is there anything strange in liking you?" Her second expression set her mouth hard and said, "What is her object?" Her voice said nothing.

"And behold him now," said Judge Tiffany.

There, indeed, came Bertram Chester, visible over their garden wall as he toiled up the hen-coop sidewalk. The Judge returned to the house; Mattie Tiffany settled herself on the piazza with the preen and flutter of a female thing about to be wooed.

The Tiffany drawing-room, panelled simply in woods, furnished with the old Sturtevant mahogany, came upon Bertram Chester like a stage setting as he entered with Mrs. Tiffany. Upstage, burned a drift-wood fire in a low hearth of rough bricks; Judge Tiffany sat there, in a spindle-backed chair, reading. Across a space broken only by a painting, a Japanese print or so, and more spindle-backed chairs, Eleanor and Kate had grouped themselves by the piano. Eleanor, turning the leaves on the music-rack, looked over her shoulder at him. She was in pink that day; the tint of her gown, blending into the tint of her fresh skin, contrasted magically with the subdued background. Kate, all in white, sat on a hassock pulling a volume from the low book shelf. All this came upon Bertram with a soothing sense which he did not understand in that stage of his development, did not even formulate.

Kate, tripping across the rugs with a lightness which perfectly balanced her weight, greeted him first; Eleanor and Judge Tiffany shook hands with more reserve. And as Bertram settled himself in an arm-chair before the fire, it was the ready Kate who put

him at his ease by opening fire of conversation.

"Did I tell you, Mrs. Tiffany, about the restaurant which Mr. Chester found for us last night? such an evening he gave us! Mr. Chester, who is Madame Loisel—you should have seen her, Judge Tiffany—you'd never dine at home again. When these young charms fade, I'm going to marry a French restaurant-keeper and play hostess to the multitude and be just plump and precious like her. How can you ever get past the counter with her behind it, Mr. Chester?"

"I'm generally hungry—that's how!" said Bertram Chester.

"That's man for you!" responded Kate. "Judge beloved, if you were a young man and Eleanor—I'm too modest to mention myself, you see—were what she'll be at forty, and she were behind a counter, and you before it, would hunger tear you away? Oh dear, it's such a bore to keep one's grammar straight!"

"I ask my wife's permission before giving the answer which is in my heart," said Judge Tiffany.

Eleanor broke into the laugh which followed.

"But I would like to know about Madame Loisel."

"Well, she's certainly a ripe pippin; you've seen that," answered Bertram, his smile on Eleanor. "And I'd like to know what she's saying when she parleys French to the garçons. She's all right if she's feeling right, but I've seen her tear the place up when the service went bad. I guess she's a square and a pretty good fellow!"

"Tell us more about her—" this from Eleanor.

"About her squareness? Well, there was the time Gentle Willie Purdy got drunk. We call him Gentle Willie because he isn't, you know. About three o'clock in the morning, he took the notion it was dinner time and climbed the side gate to the Hotel Marseillaise and pounded at the door. He faded out about then, he says. When he woke up, he was laid out on a couch, with a towel on his head, and Madame was bringing him black coffee. He tried to thank her after he felt better; and what do you think she said? 'Meester Purdy, nevaire, nevaire come to eat in thees place again.' She stayed with it too!"

"Good for her!" said Mrs. Tiffany, reaching for her crewel work.

"Oh, yes," responded Mr. Chester in the uncertain tone of one who gives assent for politeness without knowing exactly why.

"If I ever depart from the straight and narrow paths and get drunk, may I have Madame Loisel to hold my head," cried Kate.

The talk ran, then, into conventional channels—the news, the latest novel, and the season's picking at the ranch. Judge Tiffany dropped out gradually, and resumed his book; and more and more did Bertram direct his talk, salted and seasoned with his magnetism, toward Eleanor. Kate Waddington, left out of the conversation through three or four exchanges, crossed the room and draped herself on a hassock at the feet of Judge Tiffany.

"Judge darling," she said in an aside which penetrated to the furthest corner of the room, "I'm going back to my unsympathetic home before tea. Don't you think we're well enough chaperoned to go on with our flirtation just where we left off?"

"Where was I when we were interrupted?" asked Judge Tiffany, leaning forward.

"Twenty-fourth page, fifth chapter," said Kate. "I was just getting you jealous and you were trying not to show it. Mr. Chester—oh excuse me—well, I've broken in now, so I might as well get the reward of my impoliteness—may I use you to make Judge Tiffany jealous?"

"Sure you can!" answered Bertram.

"Oh, he won't do at all!" Kate was addressing Judge Tiffany again. "He's entirely too eager. Who would be a good rival anyway, Judge adored? Let's create one, like the picture of your future husband in a nickel vaudeville!"

"Eleanor," spoke Mrs. Tiffany, "suppose you show Mr. Chester your end of the house and our garden—or would you like it, Mr. Chester? We're rather proud of the garden."

"I'd like it," answered Bertram; and he rose instantly. Mrs. Tiffany made no move to accompany them; she sat bent over her yarns, her ears open. And she noticed, at the moment when Bertram made that abrupt movement from his chair, how Kate hesitated in the middle of a sentence, as though confused.

The rehearsed flirtation between Kate and Judge Tiffany faded into a game of jackstones on the floor.

Mrs. Tiffany heard the double footsteps fade down the hall, heard the garden door open and close. After a short interval, she heard the door again, and the dim footsteps sounded for but a moment. They had turned, evidently, into Eleanor's own living room. Would they stop there, these two, for a talk —yes, her gentle treble, his booming bass, drifted down the hall. Presently Mrs. Tiffany heard Eleanor's laugh, followed by his. In that instant, she looked at the jackstone players by the hearth. Kate, on the crackle of that laugh, had arrested all motion. A jack which she had tossed in the air, descended with no hand to stop it. For a moment, Kate held that intent pose; then,

"Judge wonderful, I'm a paralytic at times. You for twosies." She swept the jacks towards him with one of her characteristic gestures, free and yet deft.

A bell rang in the outer hall, and the maid entered.

"Miss Waddington is wanted at the telephone," she announced.

Eleanor, when she saw that her visitor had no intention of rejoining the party, commanded him to smoke. He rolled a cigarette, Western fashion, from powdered tobacco and brown paper, and disposed himself in the window-seat, one leg drawn up under him, his big shoulders settled comfortably against the wall. Eleanor began to talk fluently, superficially, with animation. She felt from the first that he was throwing himself against her barriers, trying to reach at once the deeper stages of acquaintance. His direct look seemed both to plead and to command. She outwitted two or three flanking movements before he took advantage of a pause and charged her entrenchments direct.

"I've said it before, but I'm going to keep on. You are pretty."

"Thank you," she replied; and smiled—mainly at the ingenuousness of this, although partly at the contrast between her present view of him and that old memory.

"Oh, it never seems to bother you when I say that," went on Bert Chester, bending his rather large and compelling black-brown eyes upon her. "Some girls would get sore, and some would like it; you never pay any at-

tention. That's one of the ways you're different."

("Heavens—is he making love already—he is sudden!" thought Eleanor with amusement.)

"You are, you know. I picked you for different the first time I saw you. I wondered then if you were beautiful—I always knew you had nice eyes—and it isn't so much that you've changed, as that the longer a man looks at you the prettier you are."

"Shall we discuss other things than me?" asked Eleanor.

"Why shouldn't we talk about you? I've never had a chance before—just think, it's the first time ever I saw you alone—even that time on the ranch a bull chaperoned us!" This minor joke, like every play of his spirit, gained a hundred times its own inherent effect by sifting through his personality. She smiled back to his smile at the boyish ripples about his mouth and eyes.

"You see, it means a lot when a girl sticks in a man's mind that way," he continued. "Why, I've carried you around right through my Senior year at college and my first year out. So of course, it must mean something."

The open windows of Eleanor's bower looked out upon a bay tree, a little thing awaiting its slaughter—for shade trees might not grow too near the windows in San Francisco. It was flopping its lance-leaves against the panes; puffs of the breeze brought in a suggestion of its pungency. That magic sense, so closely united with memory—it brought back a faint impression upon her. Her very panic at this ghost of old imaginations inspired the inquiry, barbed and shafted with secret malice:

"How many really nice girls have you known in that time?"

Bertram, sitting in considerable comfort on the window seat, flashed his eyes across his shoulder to her.

"Oh, a few in my Senior year, not many this year. What's a man going to do on twelve a week?" She noticed the indelicacy of this, since he spoke in the house of his employer. But the next sentence from him was even more startling:

"The last time I was in love was down in High School at Tulare. She's married a fellow in the salt business now. I guess she was

pretty: anyway, her hair was the color of molasses candy. I wrote a poem to her the first day I saw her."

"A poem?" asked Eleanor.

"You do well to ask that," said Bertram, throwing on one of those literary phrases by which, in the midst of his plain, Anglo-Saxon speech, he was recalling that he was a university man. "It rhymed, after a fashion."

"You don't know how to be in love until you're older," he went on.

("Even that bay scent brings up only wonder, not emotion; and I can laugh at him all the way," she thought. Yet in this tiny triumph Eleanor was not entirely happy. The vision, a little disturbing, a little shameful, but yet sweet, was quite gone.)

"Tell me about this girl with the molasses hair. She interests me. And a lot about yourself."

"Oh, I've forgotten most about her long ago. And I've something else to remember now, I hope. I'd like to talk about myself, though. I'd like some girl to hear about my ambitions. I really think it would do me good."

He stopped, as though expecting an answer. None came. He bent his eyes closer on her and repeated:

"It would!"

And at that moment, a pair of high heels tapped in the doorway, a cheerful voice called for admission through the portières, and enter Kate Waddington. Mr. Chester, Eleanor saw, rose to her entrance as one who has not always risen for women; there was something premeditated about the movement.

"Mrs. Tiffany said you two were in here," she began in her full, rich contralto, "and I made so bold, Nell—Mrs. Masters is taking a party over to their ranch next Sunday. One of her men has disappointed her and she's just telephoned to give me the commission to fill his place. Mr. Chester, you are an inspiration sent straight from Heaven. Any other man, positively any other, would be a second choice—but she didn't know you when she made up the party, so how could she have invited you?"

She paused and threw an arch look past Eleanor.

"Sure I'll come!" said Bertram, jarred into

the vernacular by his internal emotion of pleasant surprise. "Sure—I'd be delighted."

"I told Mrs. Masters you'd be the ready accepter," said Kate.

"You're going too, aren't you?" asked Bertram of Eleanor.

"No; I had to decline, I'm sorry to say."

"And I'm sorry; blame sorry." He turned back toward Kate Waddington, and she, the lightning-minded, read his expression. He had made a great *faux pas;* he had seemed more eager toward Eleanor, to whom he owed no gratitude for the invitation, than toward her.

"Would you care to drop in on Mrs. Masters as you go down town to let her know that you are coming? Or if you wish I'll tell them—I'm going now—that way." Her tone gave the very slightest hint of pique; her attitude put a suggestion. The game, plain as day to Eleanor, raised up in her only a film of resentment. Mainly, she was enjoying the humor of it.

Bertram rose promptly.

"It is time I was going," he said. "I've enjoyed myself very much, Miss Gray. If

you don't mind, I'd like to come to see you again."

"And I'll get into my things," said Kate.

They all moved toward the door.

Kate passed first; then Eleanor. There hung beside the door-casing a hook, designed to hold the portière cord. Eleanor brushed too close; it caught in the lace at her throat. She pulled up with a jerk, gave a little cry; the lace held fast. She turned—in the wrong direction.

Bertram saw this tiny accident; he sprang forward, caught the lace, disentangled her. And to do so, he must reach about her so that his arms, never quite touching her, yet surrounded her as a circle surrounds its centre. She turned and looked up to thank him, surprised him, surprised herself, in that position.

And a wave which was fear and loathing and longing and agitation ran over her with the speed of an electric current, and left her weak.

Her face, with its own sweet inscrutability, showed little change of expression; but he caught a dullness and then a glitter of her eye, a heave of her bosom, a catch of her breath. As he stood there, his great frame

towering above her, something which she feared might be comprehension came into his eyes. And—

"You make a picture—you two there!" called Kate Waddington from without. The transitory expression in his eyes—Eleanor saw it now with triumph—was that of one who has thrown a pearl away. But he followed.

Dining with Mark Heath in the Hotel Marseillaise that night, Bertram fell into a spell of musing, a visible melancholy uncommon in him; for his ill-humors, like his laughters, burned short and violent. Mark Heath —by this time he was growing into a point of view on his chum and room mate—remarked it with some amusement and more curiosity.

Mark was casting about for an opening, when Bertram anticipated him. Staring into the dingy wall of the Hotel Marseillaise, past the laborers, the outcasts, the French cabmen purring over their cabbage soup, he said in a tone of musings:

"When Bert Chester grows up and gets rich, he'll take unto himself a wife. We'll live in a big house in the Western Addition with a

bay frontage. It will be furnished with dinky old dull stuff, and those swell Japanese prints and paintings. And I'll have two autos and a toy ranch in the country to play with. We'll give little dances in the big hall downstairs. I'll lead the opening dance with the missus, and then I'll just take a dance or so with the best looking girls—the ones I take a special cotton to. I'll have my home sweet home dance with the missus—" he fell again to musing.

"A man up a tree," said Mark Heath, "would say you were in love."

"I'll be damned—I wonder if that ain't the matter?" said Bertram Chester.

CHAPTER VII

THE Ferry, doorway to San Francisco, wore its holiday Sunday aspect as Bertram Chester approached it. A Schuetzen Park picnic was gathering itself under the arches, to the syncopated tune of a brass band. The crowd blazed with bright color. The young men, in white caps, yellow sashes of their mysterious fraternity, and tinted neckties like the flowers of spring, lolled and larked and smoked about the pillars. Fat mothers and stodgy fathers fussed over baskets and progeny. Young girls, in white dresses and much trimming of ribbons, coquetted in groups as yet unbroken by the larking young men. Over these ceremonial white dresses of the Sunday picnic, they wore coats and even furs against the damp, penetrating morning—rather late in the season it was for picnics. In the rests of the ragtime, rose the aggressive crackle of that flat, hard accent, with its curious stress on the "r," which would

denote to a Californian in Tibet the native of South of Market, San Francisco.

Bertram Chester, had he been accustomed to spare any of his powers for introspective imagination, might have beheld his cross-roads, his turning point, in this passage through the South of Market picnic to the little group waiting, by the Sausalito Ferry, to take him to the Masters ranch. But a month ago, he himself had whistled up that infatuated little milliner's apprentice who was his temporary light of love, and had taken her over to Schuetzen Park of a Sunday. He had drunk his beer and shaken for his round of drinks with the boys, had taken the girl away from a young butcher, had fought and conquered the bookmaker's clerk who tried to take away the milliner's apprentice from him, and had gone home, when the day was done, with his head buried on that soft curve of the feminine shoulder which was made to receive tired male heads.

Now, without a backward look, he was walking toward Sydney Masters, Mrs. Masters, the sprightly and dainty Kate Waddington, and those others, grouped about them,

who might be guides and companions on his new way.

Kate Waddington had acquainted him in advance with the party, so that the introductions brought no surprises. That young-old man with the sharp little face was Harry Banks, mine owner, millionaire, and figure about town—every one in San Francisco knew him or knew about him. That tall, swaying girl with the repressed mouth, the abundant hair coiled about her head, the rather dull expression, was Marion Slater—"she paints miniatures and hammers brass and does all kinds of art stunts," Kate had said. That tall young man, who radiated good manners, was Dr. Norman French; that little woman, all girl, was Alice Needham, his fiancée. "They play juvenile lead in this crowd," had been Kate's phrase for them.

Kate, taking possession of Bertram at once, gave him her bag to carry, and, as the gates opened and the whistle blew, she walked beside him. From the upper deck, this Masters party watched that city panorama, spread on the hills for all to see, roll away from them, the wheeling flocks of gulls trailing the

craft in the roads, the surge of golden waters rolling in from the Gate. A morning mood blew in upon the winds; the party became gay.

Bertram, in the rise of his morning spirits, performed certain cub-like gambols for the benefit of Kate Waddington. The company failed not to notice that he had assisted her up the gangway by slipping his hand under her elbow. On the deck, he cut her out immediately from the rest, insisted on tucking her veil into his pocket, made a pretence of trying to take her hand. Even Kate found it hard to parry these advances. Banks, slouching back on a bench in his easy, indolent attitude, looked over toward them, and his mouth tightened and set. So much had he been courted for his wealth and personality, this Harry Banks, that among his familiars he assumed the privilege of falling into moods without reason or preliminary notice. His present mood was a perverse one; and he took it out on its reason for being—this presumptuous outsider.

"Me Gawd, Jimmie, but me belt hurts!" he called out suddenly in his richest imitation of the South of Market dialect. With his

light step of a dancer, he skipped over to Kate Waddington, whirled her to her feet, and began to waltz about the forward deck, imitating the awkward, contorted, cheek-to-cheek style of the Schuetzen Park picnic. Kate, who fell in at once with every invitation, had laughed as he began to whirl her, but she flushed too. The whole upper deck was craning necks to stare. Mrs. Masters caught her breath and whispered, "Oh, don't!" Dr. French and Alice Needham fell to talking apart, as though repudiating, in their embarrassment, such company. Marion Slater, sitting at ease on her bench, cast one glance at Harry Banks as he whirled to face her. His eyes fell; on the next turn, he waltzed Kate back to her seat. The relationship between these two was a puzzle to their familiars. He, the uncaught bachelor, the flaneur, the epicurean, he who lived for his pleasures, taking them with a calculated moderation that he might preserve the power to enjoy; she, the etiolated, the subtle, the earnest follower of art, she who seemed always a little too earnest and conventional for that group of the frivolous and unconventional rich—people had wondered for years how

there could be anything between them. These two alone understood that the bond was of the mind, not of the flesh or the spirit. She but thought, and he thought with her; she but lifted her eyebrow or moved her hand, and the motion translated itself to speech in his mind. That glance of her had made his mind say, "I am making them all ridiculous."

And, like the spoiled child that he was, he ceased from one naughtiness only to plunge into another and worse one. As Kate dropped to the bench, he looked at Bertram and said:

"You try it; I am a little rusty." One of his rare embarrassments flamed into the face of Bertram Chester. The shot had gone more truly than Harry Banks could have known.

"No, thank you," Bertram said simply, and flushed again.

Masters spoke up from his corner:

"Well, Chester, you ought to be a good dancer if build counts—though I shouldn't like to have you showing off your accomplishment right here—you might lack the public finish of the Banks style. You big football fellows always have the call on the little men

in dancing. It is a matter of bulk and base, I think." The ferry boat was passing Alcatraz now, and the populace had turned its attention away from Harry Banks and his party. The spoiled child kept straight ahead.

"They make real, ball-room gents," he said. He turned toward Marion on this; turned as though he could not keep his look away. She lifted her eyebrow again, and he fell into a sulky silence.

The others rushed to the first refuge of tact—personalities. After a moment, Banks joined the talk; and then appeared another aspect of his perverse mood. He took the conversation into his own hands, and he talked of nothing which could by any chance include Bertram Chester, the callow newcomer, the outsider. It was all designed to show, it did show, how intimate they were, how many old things they had in common—never a passage in which Bertram could join by any excuse. Even so did Banks direct it as to draw Kate Waddington into the talk. Bertram sat apart, then, his face showing all his displeasure. His straight brows set themselves in a frown, which he bent sometimes at the group volleying personalities at Harry

Banks, and sometimes on the terraced hills of Sausalito.

When they trooped off with the crowd, Kate fell in beside Bertram again. Lagging deliberately, she let a group of picnickers come in between them and the rest of their party. He was still frowning.

"I'd like to soak that man," he said. "Maybe I will."

"No you won't!" said she.

"Won't I?" he replied.

"Oh, don't think I haven't seen it all. He was horrid. You see, we've got used to him. You're meeting him new, and you don't quite understand him yet."

"Well, I'm going to spend no sleepless nights trying!"

"He's really very clever and kind, at bottom. You'll come to like him as we all do. And he's a man that it's good for you to know."

Bertram seemed to be considering this.

"Well, what did he mean, anyway?" he snapped.

"Nothing. It's just his foolery. We all had to take it from him at first—and then we came to appreciate him."

Bertram answered with an impatient gesture. Kate caught his arm, held it for just a second.

"Now, you wouldn't spoil my day, would you?" she asked softly. "You know I'm responsible for you—"

His frown melted into his smile.

"Sure, if you put it like that!"

"Now, you're a sensible, accommodating, self-restrained lad, and every other adjective in Samuel Smiles. You could charm the buttons off a policeman—and you'll see how really nice he can be."

"You'll take out time until I get over my grouch?"

"Of course." They were approaching Masters and Dr. French, who stood waiting by the train platform. "Late and happy!" she called.

Harry Banks, walking ahead beside Marion Slater, had taken his own wordless rebuke from her. During the train passage, he made the concession of keeping away from Bertram, and grouped himself off in the other double seat. Bertram, sitting with Kate and the engaged couple, spoke but seldom and then languidly. He did not come face to face

with Harry Banks again until the buckboards had delivered them at the Masters ranch.

This estate bore the title of "ranch" only by courtesy. Masters himself said that he raised nothing but mild Hell on his forty acres. He did have an olive orchard, a small orange grove flourishing by luck of a warm gorge in the hills, and a little fancy stock. Kate and Masters took possession of the new guest at the gate, and carried him over the estate for inspection. Mainly, Bertram took this entertainment sullenly. He warmed a little at the sight of the cattle. The house, built by Masters's own design, drew only the comment, "pretty nice." After that, Bertram was free to go to his room and dispose his belongings. Returning in a marvelously short time, he came out upon the house-party, grouped all in the big, redwood ceiled living-room.

A fire of driftwood snapped with metallic crackling on the hearth. Alice Needham sat with Dr. French beside it; Mrs. Masters, pausing in a flight of supervision, had stopped to speak with them; Alice was looking up at her, presenting her fresh, full-faced view to the gaze of the man on the staircase.

Marion Slater stood with Masters by one of the Dutch windows, criticizing the design with a painter's half-arm gestures. Banks, by another window, sat dividing his time between a book and the valley below.

It happened then, as Bertram stood there, that Alice Needham looked in his direction. It happened, also, that she was smiling. He caught her smile and smiled back.

That smile was half the secret of his physical charm. In the first place, it broke with wholly unexpected force. His face, what with its heaviness of feature, was a little forbidding and severe. As he bent his unillumined gaze, he appeared stern—even angry. Then, with the sudden preliminary vibration of an earthquake, that smile would begin to quiver about his mouth, to start wrinkles about his eyes. Next, as he bent his head forward toward the target of his charms, it drew back the corners of his mouth to show his white teeth, it pulled eyelids and eyebrows into a tiny slit, through which his pupils twinkled like electric sparks. These movements—wholly muscular at that—spiritualized and transformed his face.

Mrs. Masters, looking up at the interrup-

tion, was caught in this flood of charm and good will. Harry Banks, feeling a psychic current running about the room, looked up also; and that smile caught him. It carried away the last trace of his perverse mood. And Bertram heaved himself down the stairs and crossed at once to seat himself beside Alice Needham.

"I see at a glance I'm going to like this party," he said. On other lips there would have been nothing to laugh at in this; but they all did laugh. In a minute more, Harry Banks had dropped his book and crossed over to the fireplace. Bertram, leading the talk now, took him in without a trace of apparent resentment. Kate, emerging from the room, dropped down beside Harry Banks on the floor and joined her cheerful pipe to the symphony of good fellowship. Before luncheon, this find of hers was the centre of the party; events were revolving about him.

In the lazy hour after meat, the engaged couple found chance to slip out into the orange grove. Masters, summoned by his foreman, went to look after a sick cow, Harry Banks went back to his reading, and Alice Needham to a design for a window seat which

she was building for the Masters dining-room. These pairings left Bertram and Kate to each other; and presently they were out-of-doors, drawing on into the woods. Masters, from the barn, watched them and noted what a goodly couple, what a faun and dryad in clothes, they were. Kate Waddington was turning over her shoulder her slow and rather lazy smile, which began at her lips and lit her green-grey eyes last of all. That was her best attitude of head. Bertram swung up the trail, making progress by main force—not walking so much as lifting himself on those sturdy, saddle-sprung legs of his. He was making wide, sweeping gestures; and Kate, as he talked, leaned a little toward him now and then, like a woman absorbed.

Momentarily, she had him on the subject of football. He was touching upon the subject of one Bill Graham, Stanford tackle and opponent in two varsity games, whom she knew and whom he was teaching her to know better. Bertram stooped and gathered a handful of pebbles from the trail to show how Bill Graham used to throw sand in his eyes; he thrust his open hand against an alder, bordering the trail, to show how he

contravened these tactics by slamming Bill Graham in the face. Even so far did loosen his tongue and spirit that he boasted of his victories and excused his defeats. He went further; he touched upon the most frightful disappointment of his career.

"It was in the ten to nothing game," said he. "You remember, don't you, how they had us down on our ten yard line early in the second half? We got the ball away. Nobody had scored yet. Well, Stuffy Halpin he gave the signal for a delayed pass on end. That was a freak play we were trying out that year—delayed pass first and then the back passed to me. I jogged Bill Graham and he stumbled down the field just bull-headed—he never did have much football sense. I looked down toward the goal"—(Bertram had been gesticulating wildly; now he gave the outstretched fingers of his right hand a sudden fillip to show the changed direction of his glance) "and I saw a clear field right straight to the fullback or glory—"

"Gracious! What happened?" asked Kate. She was capable, wit and social strategist that she was, of assuming all this interest by way of leading an inept youth to make a fool and

a braggart of himself for her amusement. But she showed not a glimmer of irony, neither in her mouth nor in her green-grey eyes. She spoke with the straight, sincere interest of a dairymaid listening to the self-told heroisms of a stable boy.

"Stuffy tumbled all over himself and dropped the ball!"

Bertram's answer conveyed all the tragedy in the world.

They were come now to a place where the trail ran steep and the redwoods thickened to make a Californian hillside. It was November, but the season was late. The earth was washed bright by the early rains and not yet sodden with the later ones. The black, shaded loam, bare of grass, oozed the moisture it was saving for its evergreen redwoods against a rainless summer. In the dark clefts grew scentless things of a delicate, gnome aspect—gold-back fern, maiden-hair overlying dank, cold pools, sorrel, six-foot brake. No blossoms blew among all this greenery; only by that sign and by the wet, perspiring earth might one know that it was autumn on those hills.

The clean ooze and dew started a little

stream which ran, choked with maiden-hair, to the trail, and formed a pool. Some philanthropic camper had driven a nail into the rock and hung there a tin cup. Kate (Bertram still talking and gesticulating at her left) threw a perceptive glance.

"How good the water looks!" she said. "I believe I am thirsty!"

While he filled the cup, she seated herself on the rock, disposed herself into a composition; and after they had both drunk, she showed no disposition to move from her perch. In fact, she loosened her brown student beri, shook her hair free, and sat there, a wood-nymph framed by the ruddy brown and dark green of redwood and laurel. He crouched his big frame down beside her, so that she leaned back against the rock. A long silence, and:

"Nature is mighty nice!" he said.

Then, perceiving her as a part of the picture, he added:

"And you're the nicest thing about it."

At this frontal attack, Kate waited to see whether it meant further attack, skirmish, or retreat. His general softness of expression, showed that it meant attack.

Bertram, in fact, was in the mood for attack on rose citadels. A year of life on twelve dollars a week—cheap, crowded lodgings, meals at the Hotel Marseillaise, the landlady's daughter and those of her kind for companionship—and now, in a week, the refinements of the Tiffany house, the refinement plus entertainment of the Masters villa, and these two lovely, fragrant women. It seemed all to roll up in him as he sat there, the woods about him and this golden creature at his side; and it found half-unconscious expression on his lips.

"I'm going to be rich some day," he said.

"I hope so."

"I am, sure. When I get rich I'm going to have a place like this—I'll have a long pull by that time and be able to invite anybody I want—this is the only way to live." His voice fell away.

Then he looked up and bent upon her that smile.

"It's great to have a girl like you to confide in," he said.

"Thank you; but you haven't confided much as yet," responded Kate.

"I don't suppose there is a whole lot to

confide. At least, things you'd want to tell a girl like you. Only one thing. I'm in love!"

The arrest of all motion in Kate which followed this declaration was like one of those sudden calms which fall over a field at the approach of evening. It descended upon her in the mid-course of a gesture; it wrapped her about in such a stillness that neither breath nor blood stirred. Then, though only her lips moved, her vocal cords responded to her will.

"And she is to be mistress of the villa when you get rich?"

"If she'll take me," said Bertram. "You see, it is a brand new case. I've just got it —just realized it. She's up and I'm still down, so it wouldn't be square to say anything about it, now would it?"

"No," answered Kate softly, "though we women like bold lovers too."

"Yes, that's so. And I suppose if I keep too still about it, somebody else will come riding onto the ranch and carry her off. It's my game, I guess, to stay around and watch. And if I find any gazebo getting too thick with her, then up speaks little Bertie for the word that makes her his.

"If she'll have me," he added. "But she's a good many pegs above me just now and I've got more than a living to make. Of course, that'll come all right if I have fair luck. If it was easy money plugging my way through college, it will be easy plugging it through the world. Don't you size it up about that way?"

Kate clasped her hands and leaned forward.

"If you're playing the long game, I suppose so. But wouldn't you do better at least to hint to the girl?"

"I guess you can advise me about that," said he. "Better than anybody I know. Suppose I tell you all about it?" A little panic ran through the nerves of Kate.

"Now?" she said, "are—are you ready?"

"Now-time is good-time," he said. "Well, I guess you've savveyed just who it is and what's the matter. It's—it's Miss Gray—Eleanor Gray."

To the end of her days, Kate Waddington remembered to be thankful for a certain cotton-tail rabbit. At that moment precisely, this fearling of the woods streaked down the trail, pursued by a dog whose heavy crashing sounded in the distance; came out upon them,

whirled with a loud roaring of fern and leaves, screamed the heart-rending scream of a frightened rabbit, and dashed off into the wood. The sound, coming in this tender moment, betrayed Bert Chester into a guilty start. So, when he looked back, her face was as smoothly beautiful as ever and she was even smiling.

"You lucky boy!" she said. And then, "I don't blame you. I wouldn't blame any man." Bertram fairly glowed.

"I knew you'd agree with me," he said. "Say, what chance do I stand—honest, what do you believe she thinks of me?"

"Honest, I never heard her say. It is likely she hasn't begun to think of it at all. Women are slower than men about such things. How long have you been—in love with her?"

"Of course, I've been that way ever since I saw her first—ever since I was a student, picking prunes for her uncle, and went down and helped her run a bull off her place. I thought then that I never saw nicer eyes or a more ladylike girl. She's always given me the glassy eye. I think she hates me—no, it

isn't that, either. She just feels superior to me."

"Oh, perhaps not that!"

"Well, anyhow, I was in college and any one girl looked about the same to me as any other—" Bertram wrinkled his brows in contempt for his utter, undeveloped youngness of two years before—"but I remembered her always. When I saw her sitting in the Hotel Marseillaise that evening, I felt queer; and after I called on her I just knew I had it. Funny, you coming in that afternoon. You and I have hit it off so well, and here I'm confiding in you! It was a regular luck sign, I think."

Kate's voice, when she spoke, fell to its deeper, richer tones.

"And I'm sure I feel flattered—any girl would. I really thank you—you don't know how much."

"And you'll help me, won't you?"

"With my advice—yes."

"Well, that's all I want. If I win this game, I want to win it square.

"Say, you are sure the goods. You're as pretty—it wouldn't be natural for a man to

say you're as pretty as she is, but a man can just look at you and wonder—" and here he dropped one of his hands gently upon hers. She let it rest there a moment before she drew away.

"We'd better be going back," she said. "They'll think it's I and not Eleanor, if we stay so long."

As they started, he stooped to get her another drink. Standing above him, her hand lifted toward her student beri, she bent her gaze on his back. A peculiar look it was, as though an effort against pain. It faded into an expression like hunger.

CHAPTER VIII

IT seemed afterward to Bertram Chester, reviewing the early events of a life in which he was well pleased, that his real attack on things, his virtual beginning, came with that houseparty of the Masters's. The victory of his smile on the staircase he followed up that evening to a general conquest. For Masters, when dinner was over, brewed a hot punch. They drank it about the driftwood fire, and even the severe Marion Slater relaxed and made merry. The essence of the gods strips self-control and delicacy first, so that the finer wit goes by without tribute of a laugh and the wit of poked fingers—especially if it be sauced by personality—rules at the board. After the punch had worked sunshine in them, the poked finger of this young barbarian was more compelling than the sallies of Masters or the mimicry of Harry Banks.

When the party dispersed at the Sausalito

Ferry and scattered for a workaday Monday, he found himself accepting invitations left and right. Dr. French asked him to motor out to the Cliff House that very night; Mrs. Masters wanted him to dinner; Harry Banks must have him over to his ranch under Tamalpais. Kate Waddington, mounting the steps to Banks's automobile, slipped him a farewell word.

"You were a success," she said. "That's the reward of naughty little boys when they reform!"

"Well, I'd have liked to smash his face just the same—then."

"You've done better than that—you've quite conquered him. I'll see you Wednesday at the Masters? Good bye!"

Bertram Chester sold forthwith the Richmond lots, his first venture in business, to get ready money for the wisest or the most foolish investment which a young man of affairs can make in the beginning of his career—general society. With all his youth, his energy and his eager attack on things, he plunged into the life of San Francisco. Only in that city of easy companionships and careless social scrutinies would such a sudden rise have

been possible. His furnished room, where he used to read and study of evenings in his years of beginnings, knew him no more before midnight. He dropped away from those comrades of the lower sort with whom he had found his recreation; abandoned and forgotten were his old lights of love. The milliner's apprentice, a coarsely pretty little thing, used to wait for him sometimes on the doorstep. Mark Heath, coming home one night earlier than usual, found her there, took her for a walk about the block, and conveyed to her the unpleasant news that Bertram was now flying higher than her covey. After that, she came no more; and the first phase of his life in San Francisco drifted definitely back of Bertram Chester.

We shall stop with him only three or four times in the course of that winter wherein he made his beginnings. Before it was over, he had entered, by the special privilege accorded such characters, the club about which man-society in San Francisco revolved; he had broken into a half a dozen circles of women society; he had become hail-fellow-well-met with the younger sons of the cocktail route, the loud characters of flashy Latin quarter

studios, the returned Arctic millionaires of the hour and day who kept the Palace Hotel prosperous, the patrons and heroes of the prize-fight games, the small theatrical sets of that small metropolis. Sometimes he flashed in a night through four or five such circles.

He hung of late afternoons over bars, exchanging that brainless but well-willed talk by which men of his sort come to know men. He sat beside roped rings to witness the best muscle of the world—and not the worst brain—revive in ten thousand men the primeval brute. He frolicked with trifling painters, bookless poets, apprentice journalists, and the girls who accrued to all these, through wild studio parties in Latin quarter attics. He sat before the lace, mahogany, crimson lights and cut glass of formal dinners, whereat, after the wine had gone round, his seat became head of the table.

From these meetings and revels, whereby he made his way along the path of dalliance in the easiest, most childish, most accepting city of the Western world, two or three kaleidoscopic flashes remained in his maturer memory. The night of the football game, for example, he strayed into the annual

pitched battle of noise and reproach at the Yellowstone between the California partisans and the Stanford fanatics. A California graduate, his companion along the cocktail route, recognized him; immediately, he was riding shoulder high. His bearers broke for the sidewalk, and down Market Street he went, a blue-and-gold serpentine dancing behind him. There was his first Jinks at the Bohemian club—an impromptu affair, thrown in between the revelling Christmas Jinks in the clubhouse and the formally artistic Midsummer High Jinks in the Russian River Grove. The Sire, noting his smile and figure, impressed him into service for a small part. This brought a fortnight of rehearsal which was all play and expression of young animal spirits, a night of revel refined by art, an after-jinks dinner of the cast, whereat Bertram, as usual, spoke only to conquer. Memory held also one perfectly-blended winter house-party at the Banks ranch, with the rain swaying the eucalyptus trees outside and a dozen people chosen from San Francisco for their power to entertain, making two nights and a day cheerful within.

Later in life, he, the unreflective, thought

that times had changed in his city; that men were not so brilliant nor circles so convivial as when he was very young. It was not in him to know that neither times nor men had changed; that he thought so only because he looked on them no longer through the rose glasses of youth.

He himself would have called it a season of great change, and he would have missed, at that, the greatest change of all—the transformation in himself. The face on which we saw so little written when he had that meeting in the Hotel Marseillaise, the new sheet straight from the mills of the gods, had now a faint scratching upon it. The mouth was looser in repose, firmer in action; the roving and merry eye was more certain, more accurate as it were, in its glances. His youthful assurance had changed in him to something like mature self-certainty. In those external city manners which he had set about from the beginning to acquire, he showed more ease. Although he had lost the fragrance of an untouched youth, he had become altogether a prettier figure of a man.

He needed all the prodigal youth and the cowboy strength in him to keep up his social

pace and still do his work, but he managed it. Indeed, he became of distinct value to the office through the business which he brought in from his wandering and his revelling. It seemed that he might refurbish that old law practice and find his way to the partnership which Judge Tiffany foresaw at the end of one path.

Through this consideration and through the partisan friendship of Mrs. Tiffany, he became gradually a pet and familiar of the Tiffany household, taking pot-luck dinners with them, joining them once or twice on their out-of-doors excursions. His big, bounding presence, his good-natured gambols of the Newfoundland pup order, transformed that somewhat serious and faded ménage, gave it light and interest, as from a baby in the house. Although Mrs. Tiffany mothered him, gave him her errands to do, she made no mistake about the centre of attraction for him. He was "after" Eleanor. That young woman took him soberly and naturally, laughing at his gambols, accepting his attentions, but giving no sign to Mrs. Tiffany's attentive eyes that her interest was more than indifferent friendship.

His wooing, in fact, went on in a desultory fashion, as though he were following the policy which he had expounded to Kate Waddington—"hang around and watch." He paid no more compliments to grey eyes; he paid no compliments at all. When they were alone, he entertained her with those new tales of his associations in the city, which pleased her less, had he only known it, than his tales of the ranch and gridiron. If he showed the state of his feeling, it was no more than by an occasional long and hungry look.

In one way or another, he saw nearly as much of Kate Waddington, that winter, as he did of Eleanor. Kate, too, was a ray of light. She—"the little sister of the clever" her enemies called her—made the Tiffany house a bourne between her stops at her home in the Mission and her rangings about Russian Hill. Bertram noticed with sentimental pleasure that the two girls were a great deal together. He found them exchanging the coin of feminine friendship in Eleanor's living-room, he met them on shopping excursions in Post street. When the three met so, Kate always sparkled with her best wit, her most cheerful manner; but she showed, too, a kind of

deference toward Eleanor, an attitude which said, "He is yours; I am intruding only by accident." The meaning in this attitude bore itself in, at length, even upon Bertram Chester; and he did not fail to glow with gratitude. He expressed that gratitude once or twice when he was alone with Kate. Somehow, it was easy for him to talk to her about such things.

CHAPTER IX

"ARE you off the job to-night?" came the resonant voice of Bertram Chester over the telephone.

"Yes!" Eleanor laughed. "Are you coming to play with us?"

"No. You're coming to play with me. One of our best little playmates leans over my elbow as I indite these few lines—little Katie. Mark Heath is reporting great doings in Chinatown to-night, and he wants assistance. Do you suppose your Aunt Mattie will object to Chinatown?"

"Aunt Matilda never dictates—"

"Then it's Chinatown! We'll be along for you in half an hour. We're dining with the Masters, who have inconsiderately refused to come along. What's happened to you?"

"Nothing—why?"

"Your voice sounds so chipper!"

"That shows I'm in a mood to play!"

"Then we'll be along in a *quarter* of an hour."

"And I'll be waiting at the garden gate!"

The swish and murmur of night, the rustle of a steady sea breeze, the composite rumble of the city far below, tuned with the song in Eleanor's blood as she stood waiting by the front gate. She looked down on the pattern of light and heavy shadow that was the city, and a curious mood of exultation came over her. Light foreshadowings of this mood had touched her now and again during the past two months; never before had these transitory feelings piled themselves up into such a definite emotion.

She could not trace its shy beginning, but she was aware of it first as a sense of the humanity in the cells of that luminous honeycomb below, the struggling, hoping, fighting, aspiring mass, each unit a thing to love, did one but know the best. The wave of love universal beat so strong on her heart that she turned her eyes away for surfeit of rapture, and looked up to the stars. They, the bright angels of judgment whose infinite spaces she could not contemplate without fear, united

themselves in some mysterious bond with the little human things below; the sight of them brought the same wave of rapture. Too mighty long to be endured, the wave broke into ripples of happy contemplation. Sounding lines of forgotten poems ran through her mind, movements of old symphonies, memories of her vicarious raptures before the altar in the convent, glimpses of hillsides and valleys and woods in the winter rain which she had seen unseeing that she might reserve their deeper meaning for this deeper sight of the spirit. "I wonder if this is not happiness; if Heaven will not be so?" she thought. It came, too, that if this exaltation lasted a moment longer, she should know with God the meaning of all things, the Reason which united stars and space and men and the works of men.

The resonant bass of Bertram Chester, beating down Kate's cheerful treble, floated up from the sidewalk. The sound came almost as a relief; yet on second thought she was a little sorry for their intrusion into this lonely rapture of the spirit. She looked over the wall. Kate, revealed in the light of their gate-lamp, walked between the two men, who

were bending toward her; now they were all laughing together. She was radiant, this firm-fleshed, golden flower of the West. Eleanor dipped from her clouds of glory to notice that she wore a new tailor gown, that every touch of her costume showed how she had got herself up for that special occasion. And now the spiritual fluid in Eleanor transmuted itself into a reckless gaiety. She slipped down the steps and confronted them on the sidewalk.

"Hello," said Kate, looking her over. "Well, who's given you a present?"

Eleanor hugged her. "That's just what's happened, Katie. Somebody *has* given me a present—I believe it must have been the stars." She extended her hands, right and left, to the men; holding them so, she rattled on; "Boys and girls, there's so much ego in my cosmos to-night that it's running out at every pore. I'm sure there's going to be a party to-night, and I'm sure it's got up for my benefit. I'm going to play so hard—so hard that they'll put me to bed crying! Mr. Heath, bring on your Chinese and let them gambol and frisk. It's my birthday. This isn't the date in the family Bible, as Kate

could tell you if she weren't a lady, but I'm sure my parents made a mistake. I just know that some menial is coming in a minute with a birthday cake—and the ring and the thimble and the coin and everything will be in my slice—Hello, Bert Chester!"

"Where do I come in?" enquired Kate.

"You? You come in as my dearest little playmate, to whom I sent the first invitation."

"I see at a glance," rejoined Mark Heath, "that we've got our work cut out for us. I will now announce to the Little Girl who is Having a Party the program of games and sports. The festival of the women is on in Chinatown."

"I saw it from the car as I passed Dupont Street," chimed in Kate. "And the Quarter is blazing like a fire in a tar barrel."

In the most natural manner, Kate linked herself to Mark Heath. She always yielded the place beside Bertram when Eleanor was present; quite as naturally, she herself took that place when Eleanor was away. Bertram cast a long look on his companion; and he ventured for the first time in weeks, on something like a compliment.

"What *has* happened to you? You look—

hanged if I can just tell you how you look, but it's great!"

"Oh, compliment me! I love compliments! That's my birthday present from you. I wonder if the Chinese babies will be out on the street—the little, golden babies. Why haven't they a legend about those babies? Mr. Heath, do you know Chinese mythology? Kate, aren't you sure those children are primroses transformed by the fairies to hide them from the goblins?"

Bertram frowned a little as she drew the other couple into their private conversation. But he continued to study her. This lightness and brightness which she had developed so suddenly, seemed quite to dim the radiance of his own personality. He fell into a quiet which lasted far into the evening. She, on her side, moved like one intoxicated by some divine liquor. Never had she seemed so gay, so young; and—though he did not wholly formulate this—never had she seemed to him so inaccessible.

They approached a dark alley beside an Italian tenement. Eleanor, dancing around the corner, came upon it suddenly. She drew up.

"There's an ogre in this dark den—I know there is. I must see him! Just think, I'm ten years old going onto eleven, and I never yet saw a real ogre. Come on—we're going ogre hunting!" She plunged into the shadows. Mark, laughing, followed.

Eleanor peeped into the door of a wine-house, peeped over a board fence, and came back to announce:

"He's not in. I left my card—oh, there he is—he's visiting the goblin in that garden across the street!" She skipped across to an old stone wall which held its half-acre of earth suspended over the hill-fall. Mark skipped with her; Bertram followed at a distance as one who plays a game of which he is not sure. Eleanor brought up against the wall.

"There he is—by the kitchen door. Of course you see him! Good, Kind ogre, you don't eat little girls on their birthdays do you?"

"Aren't his red eyes beautiful and hasn't he a classy set of teeth?" rejoined Mark Heath. "Be good, Fido, and you shall have a plumber for breakfast."

"But he'll spare me! He says I'm too beau-

tiful to eat!" Eleanor was dancing back. "Oh Kate, I've seen an ogre!"

Kate did not answer. She fell in with Mark Heath, and as they drew ahead she murmured:

"I wonder what's got into her?"

"Nothing I guess. I should rather say she'd got out. I think it's bully."

"Oh, yes," said Kate, drawing out the last word.

They turned into the Quarter at Washington Street, and at once they were in the midst of the festival. From a doorway burst a group of little, immobile-featured Cantonese women, all in soft greens, deep blues, reds and golds that glimmered in the gas-lights. Banded combs in jade and gold held their smooth, glossy black hair; their slender hands, peeping from their sleeves, shone with rings. The foremost among them, a doll-girl of sixteen or so, tottered and swayed on the lily feet of a lady. The rest walked upon clattering pattens, like a French heel set by the cobbler's mistake at the instep.

Mark Heath, the young reporter, proud in his knowledge of "the inside," took up the reins of conversation.

"A fairy story for you right at the start, birthday lady! That little-foot girl is the daughter of Hom Kip. You remember the story, don't you? The old plug tried to sell this daughter of his for wife to a merchant in Portland. She had her own ideas—she eloped with the second tragedian from the theatre over there. Hom Kip put detectives on them, and caught her at Fresno. But she'd already married her actor American fashion; and the Portland bridegroom is waiting until father makes his little blossom a widow."

"As temporary Empress of Chinatown, I order that he shall do nothing of the kind," said Eleanor.

"As your grand vizier, I shall put the machinery in motion that will free the beautiful young bride," rejoined Mark Heath.

Kate broke in.

"What became of the actor? I'm one of those dull persons who always wants the rest of the story!"

"I told you, didn't I, that father is going to make her a widow? At least he was until the Empress ordered otherwise. The actor has probably abandoned his art, which gives him undesirable publicity. And some day, if

father dares disobey the Empress, there'll be a mysterious murder in a backwoods laundry—police baffled."

Eleanor contemplated the lily-foot girl, swaying about the corner into Dupont, her little handkerchief in one hand, her proper fan in the other.

"Poor little blossom—I wonder if she'll mourn for him? Faithful Grand Vizier, don't tell me sad facts on my birthday night. I want only pretty things."

"Whether she'll mourn or no won't make much difference to father—or to the High-binders. Je-hoshaphat—look!"

For they had turned the corner into Dupont Street, main avenue of the Quarter. Its narrow vista came upon them at first as a smothered flame. Innumerable paper lanterns, from scarlet globes as big as a barrel to parti-colored cones that one might hold in his palm, blazed everywhere, making strange combinations, incredible shades, in the flaring Chinese signs, the bright dresses of the women. The sidewalks quivered with life—soberly dressed coolies, making green background for the gauds of their women, bespangled babies late out of bed that they might gain good luck

and blessing from those rites, priests in white robes, dignitaries in long tunics, incongruous Caucasian tourists and spectators.

A moment Eleanor drank it all in; then she addressed her Grand Vizier.

"Inform my people, through your invaluable publication, that their demonstration in my honor is perfect."

"It shall be done, liege lady—three column spread on the front page. Oh, you've got to have a shoe." For a vendor was bearing down on them, carrying a tray of pink paper shoes like valentines. "That's the symbol of this festival—the goddess lost her shoe before she died. How much, Charlie? Two bits two? All light! Empress, permit me to present this souvenir of a grateful people. Miss Waddington, have a shoe on me!"

Eleanor hung the pink trifle to the pin at her throat.

"I shall add it to the royal treasure trove," she said. It came across her then, as one of the unrelated thoughts and fancies which were coursing in such swarms through her mind, that Bertram Chester, though he stuck close to her side, had been unusually silent. She drew him in at once.

"Does it become me?" she asked.

"Everything becomes you."

"You don't say anything about *my* shoes!" said Kate.

Now the crowd began to eddy and to whirl toward the next corner. There rose the clang of gongs, the shrilling of a Chinese pipe playing a mournful air in that five-toned scale whose combinations suggest always the mystery of the East. About that corner swept the procession of the Good Lady, priests before, women worshippers behind. The priests set up a falsetto chant, the banner-bearers lifted their staves, and the parti-colored mass moved down on them.

"It's like a flower-bed on a landslide!" exclaimed Eleanor.

Mark Heath gravely pulled out his left cuff and took rapid notes with a pencil.

"That goes into the story—anything more up your sleeve like that?"

"Wasn't it good? Eleanor is always thinking up clever things to say," Kate came in. Her voice was rather flat.

At the edge of the gutter where they stood, a Chinese shoemaker had set out on a lacquer tray his offering to the gods. Red candles

bordered it, surrounding little bowls of rice and sweetmeats, a slice of roast pig, a Chinese lily. As the banners approached, certain devout coolies found room on the sidewalk to prostrate themselves. Eleanor, absorbed now in a poetic appreciation of all this glory of color and spirit, felt a movement beside her. She looked down. The shoemaker was flat on his forehead beside his offering.

"Would you per-ceive that Chink grovel," spoke the voice of Bertram Chester.

Before Eleanor could turn on him, he was addressing the shoemaker.

"Feel a heap better, Charlie? Say, whosomalla you? Brush off your knees!" The Chinese, if he understood, paid no more attention than he paid to the lamp post in his path. Gathering up his offering, he pushed his way back through the crowd.

For the first time that evening, Eleanor became somewhat like her normal self as she said:

"Why, this is a religious ceremony, isn't it —all this light and color!"

"Yes," responded the personal conductor of the party, "but you have to pinch yourself to remember it. For instance, you'll be charmed

to know that I saw one of those priests, up in front there, arrested last week in a raid on a gambling joint. Morals haven't an awful lot to do with this religion. Maybe that fellow on the pavement was praying that he'd have a chance to murder his dearest enemy, and maybe he was applying for luck in a lottery. Empress of Chinatown, up yon frazzled flight of stairs lurks the New York Daytime Lottery. The agents of said lottery are playing ducks and drakes right now with the pay of the printers on the imperial bulletin which I have the honor to represent. Some day, your grand vizier and most humble servant is going to do a Sunday story on a drawing in a Chinese lottery."

Eleanor showed no inclination to go on with the game.

"Have another shoe—one shoe, Charlie, for the little princess!" continued Mark Heath. This one, displayed amid the cone-sticks and New Years nuts of a sweetmeat stand, was bright blue. Mark hung it on Eleanor's shoulder; then, as a kind of afterthought, he bought a crimson tassel for Kate.

The procession was past, was breaking up. The women, in knots of three or four, were

scattering to the night's festivities. Mark, as guide, let business go as he led them on his grand tour of Chinatown. They stopped to survey sidewalk altars of rice paper and jade, where priests tapped their little gongs and sang all night the glory of the Good Lady; they visited the prayer store, emporium for red candles, "devil-go-ways," punks, votive tassels, and all other Chineses devices to win favor of the gods and surcease from demons; they explored the cavernous underground dwellings beneath the Jackson Street Theatre; they climbed a narrow, reeking passage to marvel at the revel of color and riot of strange scent which was the big joss house. Bertram's spirits were rising by this time; he expressed them by certain cub-like gambols which showed both his failure to appreciate the beauty in all this strangeness and his old-time Californian contempt for the Chinese as a people. Once he tweaked a cue in passing and laughed in the face of the insulted Chinaman; and once he made pretence of stealing nuts from a sweetmeat stall.

Wherever Mark found a new design in toy shoes, he bought one for Eleanor, until she wore a string of them, like a necklace, across

her bodice. Yet had the illumination gone a little out of her; she replied with diminishing vivacity to Mark's advances as he played the birthday game.

When they mounted the joss house stairs she lagged behind; and Bertram lagged with her.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "I never saw you so bright and chipper as we were awhile ago, and now—say, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. Oh, Mr. Heath—" she raised her voice, "are the actors allowed in the joss house—and if not will you have it fixed for me?"

After they had presented their votive punks to the great high god, Kate announced that she was footweary.

"Can't we find a place to sit down?" she asked. Mark took her up.

"That's the signal for tea at the Man Far Low restaurant. Ever been there? Tea store below, fantan next floor, restaurant top side all the way through the block. Come on, Empress of Chinatown. The royal board awaits."

The Man Far Low was in the throes of large preparation for the Chinese all-night

banquets which would close the festival. The cashier wore his dress tunic, his cap with the red button. The kitchen door, open on the second landing, gave forth a cloud of steam which bore odors of peanut oil, duck, bamboo sprouts and Chinese garlic; through the cloud they could see cooks working mightily over their brass pots. Every compartment of the big dining hall upstairs held its prepared table; waiters in new-starched white coats were setting forth a thousand toy devices in porcelain. Though the Chinese feasting had not yet commenced, it was plain, from the attitude of the waiters, that slummers and tourists were not wanted on that night. But still the head waiter, when he came slipping over on his felt shoes, led them to a table in the Eastern dining room, from whose balconies one overlooked Portsmouth Square. His aspect, however, was anything but cheerful.

"Say, you Chink, smile!" said Bertram as he seated himself.

By a slight turn of the head, the very slightest in the world, the Chinese showed that he caught this in all its force. But he went gravely on, setting out porcelain bowls. El-

eanor's hand moved a little, as though in restraint.

"Cheer up, Charlie, crops is ripe!" resumed Bertram.

"Don't—please," cried Eleanor. The first word came short, sharp and peremptory; the "please" was appealing.

The color rose under Bertram's brown skin. Kate, an outside party to this passage, smiled a quiet smile; but she spoke to Mark Heath.

"What *are* those paintings on that screen —come and tell me about them!"

Now Bertram and Eleanor stood alone with the table between them.

"I was jollying him!" burst out Bertram. Eleanor glanced at Kate, who stood profile-on listening to the ready Heath.

"Shall we go out on the balcony?" She stepped through the open French window.

As they stood in the shadow, the city at their feet, neither spoke for a moment. Fin-

a call-down, I suppose?" began Bert-
ntatively.
necessarily."

With a slam, he brought his hand down on the balcony rail.

"You don't give—you don't give a damn —that's the trouble with you—you don't care what I do!"

Eleanor drew a little away from him before she answered:

"I care if anyone is uncivil."

"What is it but a Chink? They expect it! Why, down in Tulare—" His voice fell away as though he recognized the futility of an attack in this form. She spoke:

"It is you who should not expect it." And then, "I am sorry I said what I did. It was an impulse. We are all imperfect. I've often been unkind myself."

Bertram stood gripping the rail before him as one caught and held by a new emotion. When he spoke, his voice was low and rather hard. At the first tone of it, she shrank from the daimon in him.

"If you only cared enough to call me down! That's the trouble with you. Am I—am I the dirt under your feet?"

"Oh, don't please!" But he was going on, too fast to be stopped.

"I'm afraid of you—that's what's the matter. What have you got in you that I can't seem to melt? You kept away from me the

first time ever I saw you. You've kept away ever since. You don't think I'm as good as you—and I'm not. But it's aggravating—it's damned aggravating—to have you rub it in. You've got something about you that I can't touch anywhere." And he paused, as though expecting her to deny it.

"I don't know what right you have to say this," she exclaimed.

In her swift rush to her own defence, she had dropped her guard. She realized it on the moment, heard his inevitable reply before he opened his mouth to the swift-flashing answer which, that outer self told her, was the only possible answer for him to make.

"Only this right. I'm in love with you. I've been in love with you ever since I saw you down at the Judge's ranch, only I didn't know it then. I love you." Silence for a moment, and then, "I love you!"

For just one instant, it seemed to her that she was swaying toward him in spite of herself. He made, curiously, no active motion toward her. That outer self of Eleanor's, reigning as always over her conscious self, commenting, criticising, seeing—that outer self remembered, above her mental turmoil,

that never in all their later acquaintance had he tried even to touch her finger.

"Oh, don't!" she cried, "please don't!"

He made a growl in his throat, the adult counterpart to a baby's cry of disappointment.

"Didn't I tell you?" he said, "and now I've laid myself wide open for a throw-down."

"If you call it that. Oh Bertram—" he and she both noticed the shift to his familiar name—"I'm afraid I haven't been fair to you. Oh, have I been fair?"

He paused as though considering a whole new range of ideas.

"Yes, I guess you have," he responded at length.

"You're a man," she said, "and a big man. I suppose I ought—to love you. To have the power of loving you in me. And oh, there have been moments when I thought I could." She stopped as though appalled by the lengths to which she had gone. "You see, I'm trying to be fair now. I'm telling you everything."

And then, with the thought which succeeded, it was as though she felt the physical tingle of bay leaves in her nostrils, "or nearly everything."

Through the open French windows came the cheery voice of Kate Waddington.

"Tea is served, ladies and gentlemen!"

"All right—be along presently!" called Bertram. And then to Eleanor:

"You must tell me—you can't keep me hanging by the toes until I see you again."

"The rest means—since I am being perfectly fair to you—that I can't tell." Now something like strong emotion touched her voice —"Don't think I am coquetting with you—don't believe that it is anything but my effort to be fair." She turned on this, and stepped through the open window.

Bertram struggling to compose his face, Eleanor wearing her old air of sweet inscrutability, they faced the quick, perceiving glance of Kate Waddington who sat pouring tea from the crack between two shell bowls.

Eleanor settled herself on the teak-wood stool.

"You *must* come out on the balcony before we go," she cried. "I never saw the city lights so wonderful."

"Well," said Kate, "it all depends on the company!"

CHAPTER X

KATE'S plump and inert mother, who always regarded this daughter of hers somewhat as a cuckoo in the nest, was in a complaining mood this morning. She sat in her dressing-gown embroidering peonies on a lamberquin and aired her grievances. Kate, writing notes at the old-fashioned black walnut writing desk, looked up at the climaxes of her mother's address, bit her pen and frowned over her shoulder. For the greater part of the time, however, Mrs. Waddington spoke to empty air.

"I never did see such a daughter," said Mrs. Waddington, jabbing with her scissors at a loose end of pink silk. "As if it isn't enough, gallivanting around the way you do, fairly living in other people's houses, never bringing any company home, but you can't even be decently civil when you *are* at home. We might just as well be a hotel for all the respect you pay us. What are you doing when you're

away, I'd like to know? It's all well enough, the stories you tell—" Kate, resting between notes, saw fit to parry this last thrust.

"I've always supposed I was capable of taking care of myself," she said. "At any rate, you've let me proceed on that theory."

It needed only the slightest flutter of an opponent's rapier to throw Mrs. Waddington on the defensive.

"You never let me," she mourned. "Goodness knows, I gave you every chance to take me along. When first you began going with those painter people, you might have counted me in."

"You didn't seem eager, perceptibly, until I had made my own way," Kate vouchsafed. At that moment the telephone rang.

While Kate was in the house, no one else thought of answering the telephone. Mrs. Waddington would have been the last to usurp the prerogative. For that instrument was the tap root of her spy system over her daughter. By it, she picked up things; learned what this irresponsible responsibility of hers was doing. Mrs. Waddington had her mental lists of Kate's telephonic friends. She imagined that she could tell, by the tone

of her daughter's voice, just who was on the other end of the line.

"Oh, Bert Chester!" came Kate's voice from the hall. Mrs. Waddington made note number one. This mention of the name was significant. The discreet Kate, who knew her mother's habits, hardly ever called names over the wire.

A pause for a very short reply, and then:

"Certainly. Zinkand at one. I'm beginning to think it's time I worked at my job as confidant. What is the use of a confidant if you don't confide?"

Mrs. Waddington leaned forward while Kate got her reply. The mother in her, unsensitized though as it was, noted the sparkle in Kate's voice. But for the intervening door, she might have seen a great deal more sparkle in Kate's face, down-turned to listen.

"Oh yes, I was aware of that!" Kate's voice went on. "Dolt! Did I catch it? You're a poor dissembler. You're too honest. You might tell the verdict before I tell you—"

Mrs. Waddington could stand it no longer. It was so uncommon for her daughter to speak thus freely and emotionally at the telephone, that she must have a look. She rose, there-

fore, and crossed past the open hall door. She noticed a certain tension in her daughter's face as she bent her head to await the reply.

"You poor, perplexed boy!" went on Kate's purring, caressing voice, "Then you need a confidant. Zinkand's at one—and I'll look my prettiest to draw you out!"

Mrs. Waddington, when her daughter was come back into the room, renewed her plaint:

"I wish you'd save for your parents a little of the graciousness you give your friends," she said. "I wouldn't mind so much if you were getting somewhere. But here you are, nearly twenty-four years old and goodness knows if you've had a young man, I don't hear about it. How can a respectable young man want to marry a girl like you, I'd like to know? Those they play with, they don't marry."

Kate's mood had changed completely. She advanced now with the prettiest caressing gesture in the world, threw one arm across the wrinkled skin and old lace of her mother's throat. Mrs. Waddington resisted for a moment, her head turned away; then, gradually, she let her being lap itself in this quieter air. Her head settled down on Kate's shoulder.

"Perhaps," said Kate, "I may."

"Well I wish you'd hurry up about it," said Mrs. Waddington. "Girls will be girls, I suppose, and they've got to learn for themselves. There, there—you're mussing my work."

Kate dropped a kiss on her mother's forehead and vanished up the stairs.

Bert Chester, waiting before Zinkand's an hour later, picked her a block away from the nooning crowd. Before he recognized the olive-green tailor suit which he had come to know, he noticed the firm yet gracile move of her. As she came nearer, he was aware of two loungers waiting, like himself, to keep appointments. He caught this exchange from them:

"Who? The girl in a kind of brownish green?"

"Yes. Isn't she a peach?"

Just then, it seemed to him, did the purely physical charm of her burst upon him for the first time. Supple and swaying, yet plump and round; her head set square with some of a man's strength, on exquisitely sloping shoulders: and the taste—he would have called it so—of her dress! A discriminating woman might have noticed that her costume bordered

on ostentatious unostentation. For it was designed in every detail to frame the picture, to set off not only that figure but also the cream of her skin, the tawny hair, even those firm, plump hands.

He found himself remembering that he had just proposed to another girl. The thought flashed in, and flashed out as quickly.

The Café Zinkand formed, at the time, a social nodule in the metropolitan parish that San Francisco was. As the Palace Hotel was its Rialto, gathering-place for prosperous adventure, so the Zinkand was its bourne. In this mahoganied and mirrored restaurant with its generous fare, its atmosphere of comfortable extravagance, those who made the city go, who gave its peculiar Saxon-Latin move and glitter, were accustomed to gather and gossip. It blazed with special splendor on the nights when this or that "Eastern attraction" showed at the Columbia Theatre. To stand on such evenings at the Powell Street terminus, to watch those tripping, gaily-dressed, laughing Californian women thronging the belt of city light from the theatre canopy to the restaurant canopy—ah, that was

San Francisco! Not Paris, not Buenos Ayres —they say who have travelled far—could show such a procession of Dianaides, such a Greek festival of joy in the smooth, vigorous body and the things which feed and clothe it. With that absence of public conventionality which was another ear-mark of the old city, all sorts and conditions of men and women sat side by side at the tables. Harlots, or those who might well pass as such, beside the best morale there is in women; daughters of washerwomen beside daughters of such proud blood as we have; bookmakers' wives, blazing with the jewels which will be pawned to-morrow, beside German housewives on a Saturday night revel; jockies and touts from the race tracks beside roistering students from Stanford and Berkeley; soldiers of fortune blown in by the Pacific winds, taking their first intoxicating taste of civilization after their play with death and wealth, beside stodgy burghers grown rich in real estate; clerks beside magnates—all united in the worship of the body.

At noon, however, its workaday aspect was on; it was no more than a lunching place. Chester and Kate found seats in a retired corner.

She looked him over with cool mischief while she drew off her gloves and let one white hand, still creased in pink with the pressure of the seams, drop toward him on the table.

"I am not exactly to congratulate you," she said, "but for a man who was turned down last night you don't seem exactly unhappy."

Bertram let several expressions chase themselves over his face before he blurted out:

"What's the matter with me?"

"Not a great deal. Has she so refused you as to make you conscious of sin?"

"It wasn't a cold turn-down. I'd like it better if it was. I'd have something to go on. It's—it's like trying to bite into a billiard ball. I—you know what I mean."

"You mean that she holds herself above you —that she feels superior to you?"

Bertram arrested all motion on that word, sat with the menu card, which he had been twirling, immovable between his hands.

"Yes. If you want to jolt it to me good and hard that way. I guess that is what it does mean."

"I suppose then that the crisis—last night—came about from your little passage with the

Chinese waiter? It happened while you were out on the balcony didn't it?"

Bertram stared and glowed.

"Say, you're a wonder. You reach out and get things before they come to you at all. That's just what did happen."

"And then? Or pardon me, I don't want you to tell me any more than it's right for you to tell—any more than you feel like telling."

"Oh that's all right. Well, when we got outside it was the same old song. She didn't care enough even to call me down. And like a fool I came out with it. What's the use of telling what she said or what I said? It was just the same way. She kept me dancing. She wouldn't say yes and she wouldn't say no. She seemed anxious about only one thing. She wanted to know if she'd been fair to me."

"I suppose she has—!" Kate brought this out as though he had put a question to her. "And you want to know what I think?"

"I sure do."

"I think she cares—at least a little—shall I tell you all?"

Bertram, even in the hottest of this conversation, did not forget the needs of his body.

The waiter stood at his elbow. He rushed through the order, and continued:

"I want to know everything."

"Well, to begin with—Bert Chester, you're a man."

"I didn't ask for hot air."

"That's all of that. You're an unfinished man. You—haven't had the chance to get all the refinements which people like Eleanor Gray have acquired. Do you see now? You've made it—you've been making it—all for yourself. You had no fortune. It's splendid the way you worked to get all these things. I know the story of how you got through college. Everyone who knows you is proud of that. But—well Eleanor's mother was rich and proud before she married, and her grandparents were richer and prouder. Then she's lived a great deal alone; and she never really blossomed out until she went abroad. So she learned her social ways from Europeans. She's got a lot of British and Continental ideas.

"With the rest of us, you know, it doesn't make any difference. You could perceive that by the way we've taken you in. Why, it's really a part of you. You're only two

years out of college, hardly that; and you're still studying law; but think how people have taken you up! It is simply that Eleanor looks at it in a different way. It's a pretty peculiarity in one of the sweetest girls I know."

Kate paused. Bert made no move to answer. She went on:

"Now about the thing you can't grasp in Eleanor. It's this way. You can't see her nature as another *girl* can. She's just as sweet and tender and delicate as she can be, and she has high ideals—that's one result of her living away from the world. If she were a little warmer in temperament, it might be different, but—" Kate paused here as though pondering whether to reveal or to conceal the thought of her mind.

"But of course it is the coldness of a diamond or a sapphire or something else very pure and precious."

Bertram Chester pulled himself up at this point and plucked at a place away back in the conversation.

"What are these things that I don't know? Where is it that I fall down?"

"They are some of the finer points."

"Well tell me." Kate noticed that the

color had risen in his cheeks and that his eyes drooped from hers.

"They must be corrected as we go on—provided you'll let me correct them."

"That's what I am asking for—but I'd blame well like an example."

"Well, now, we'll take that waiter episode. The kind of people she'd like to know treat servants impersonally. Servants are just conveniences to them, like dumb waiters. So of course,—even if it was only a Chinaman—she didn't like your noticing him and she came out of her shell for just a moment to say so. Do you see now?"

Bertram's dark complexion reddened with the rush of his shame.

"Oh, that's the idea is it? I thought from something she said that she was afraid I'd hurt his feelings. She wants me to put more front on before 'em, does she?"

"Just about that. She doesn't like to see you put yourself on a level with them."

"All right, that was straight over the plate and I got it."

Again Kate reached over to pat his hand.

"Now don't take it seriously; I know—she herself must know—how splendid and able

and promising you are—how much of a man!"

Bert spoke in some irritation.

"I always knew I wasn't a gentleman," he said, "but this is the first time it was ever shot straight at me that way."

"Bert Chester, as long as I'm a friend of yours don't you ever dare say to me that you're not a gentleman. You're one of the biggest and strongest gentlemen I ever knew. Anyone need only see you for five minutes to know you're that. But some people have certain things which they attribute to a gentleman—notions, as I've said. And Eleanor from her European experiences has some of these notions. Don't you see?"

The smile, which always broke so suddenly, came back to Bert Chester's face.

"Well, of course that's why I broke loose from the ranch and went to college in the first place. I wanted to be as good, every way, as the best there is!"

"And you are already!"

He shook his head.

"No, or this wouldn't have happened. I want to be good enough to marry any girl, no matter who. I'm going to amount to some-

thing. I'm going to be rich, too—and a darn sight quicker than most people know. I don't know that we came here to talk about that, though."

"Please go on. We came here to talk about you—anything about yourself."

"That part of it has something to do with the main issue. I'm going to pull out from Judge Tiffany as soon as I go up against the bar examinations next month. At least, I want to pull out, and I'm only wondering how the Judge will take it and how she will take it. You see, I might just as well get admitted, and then it is good-bye to law for me afterwards unless I use it in politics. Law—" Bertram rammed his finger on the table with each word that followed "law is too blame slow. Anyone could see that I couldn't be chasing about as I'm doing if I had to depend on what Judge Tiffany is paying me as a clerk. Why, I've made twice as much already whirling at business. I'll always have my admission to the bar, too. If I want to settle down on a law practice after I get rich, I can do it."

"That seems very promising to me."

"But here's the question. Is the Judge going to take it for a throwdown, and how is Eleanor going to like the program?"

Kate appeared to be considering. In fact, she was considering a great many more things than Bertram knew.

"I'm pretty sure Eleanor wouldn't care," she said at length. "Hers isn't a very practical mind. It's impossible to say about Judge Tiffany. He's crotchety. The right's on your side, for a man has a right to change his employment, hasn't he? And I'm sure you have more than returned your little salary. On the whole, I don't know but it would be better for you with Eleanor if the Judge did get angry with you. A girl with ideals like hers rather likes to have a man persecuted. And you can't let it stand in the way of your career."

"But—"

"Oh, it isn't as though it were a choice between the girl and the career. It isn't at all. The best way to win her is to build yourself up to the big, splendid man she'd like you to be. If you stay a little law clerk for five years or so, you won't have much induce-

ment to offer her! When you consider marriage, you have to remember that a girl like Eleanor can't live on a trifle. I'd follow my own career. It isn't, you see, as though there were anyone else in the field. Other men come to the house, of course—men she's met at the Masters, old friends of the family—but I don't consider any of them as rivals. I did think for a time that Ned Greene was attracted, but he's crazy now over Katherine Herbert. So it isn't a case for immediate action."

"Do you think—have you ever heard her speak of me?"

Kate's answer came readily.

"She has spoken to me of you—the way women do, so that you see under what they say. We women are devils"—she smiled—"no, I can't tell you what she said. I'm in a peculiar position about it. You see, her talk, as it happens, is all twisted up in a confidence she made to me—something else in her life—nothing to do with you—and I can't break it. But I can do something without breaking any confidence. I can tell you what I think you ought to do."

"Well, I guess that's what I want—" with the air of one who would have liked a great deal more.

"The man who gets Eleanor Gray—and especially if Bertram Chester is the man—cannot take her by assault. If you reach out to grasp her—you who are so strong—it will only break something in that delicate nature of hers. Don't woo. Serve. Don't even see her too often. Don't renew that scene on the balcony—never make that mistake again. When you are with her, show by your attitude how you feel, and show her—well, that you're learning the things you've asked me to teach you—the things I'm going to teach you."

"It's sure a pink tea program," said Bertram. Kate laughed.

"Bert Chester, when you make your dying speech from the scaffold you're going to say something original and funny. You can't help it. Now can you?"

The smile broke again on Bertram's face.

"Well, it has its funny side," he admitted. "All right. If refinement's the game, me to it." His smile had caught Kate's laugh, and there came between them a kind of mental

click. Soft gratitude sprang into his heart and quivered on his lips.

"You're a bully girl! I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have you to talk it over with. And you really do understand lots about women and those things—where did you learn it?"

The smile went out of Kate. She drooped her eyes and let her pink nails flutter on the tablecloth.

"Suffering and experience, I suppose."

"Could I—would you tell me about it?"

She looked up with an air of sweet sincerity.

"I should like very much to tell you. You could help me as much as you say I'm helping you. Some other time, we'll have that all out together. You see, when one has held a thing in her heart for a long time—well, it's a struggle at first to get it out. But sometime when I'm in the mood!"

And then he discovered that an appointment at the office was overdue. While they went through the formalities of checks and wraps, she talked foolish nothings. He parted with her hurriedly to run after a Market Street cable car.

"We're going to be the best chums in the world," he said as he shook hands.

"Indeed we are!"

She watched him as he ran after the car, swung on the platform with the easy economy of motion which belongs to the athlete. But just before he set his foot on the platform and looked back at her, she herself whirled and started down the street, so that he saw only her trim back-figure, the glint of her bronze hair, the easy grace of her walk.

CHAPTER XI

SO Bertram Chester went on, the easy familiar of the Tiffany establishment, the contriver of Mrs. Tiffany's household assistances, and the devoted follower of Eleanor. He never referred in any way to the scene on the restaurant balcony; he did nothing formally to press his suit. Indeed, his occasional air of gentle diffidence puzzled and amused her. She had a queer sense, when she beheld him so, that she liked it in him less than some of his old uncouthness, and only a trifle better than such roughness of the heart as that passage with the Chinese waiter. This new attitude was loose in the back, tight across the shoulders, short in the seams—it was not made to fit Bertram Chester. When he launched out into rudimentary art criticism, stringing together the stock slang which he had picked up in the studios, when he tried to impress her with his refined acquaintance, his progress toward "society" of the conventional kind, her amusement took another turn

in the circle of emotion, and became annoyance.

In general company, he reverted to type. At their home dinners, when wine and good fare had lit the fires of his animal spirits, he still told his rambling, half-boastful stories of the cow country and of College times, or laid before these home-stayers the gossip of the town. That manner of his, always more compelling than either his substance or his words, carried the plainest story; and he had at least the art of brevity. One laughed when he laughed, catching from his spirit the humorous idea, even when its expression failed on the tongue. Voice and gesture and an inner appreciation which he could flash instantly to his tongue contributed to these dazzling effects. His new-made friends of the artistic set used to tell him, "If you could only write down your stories—what humor, what action!" Mark Heath, with the information of a room mate, the judging eye of a half-disillusionized friend and the cynicism of a young journalist, was first to perceive that a stenographer concealed to transcribe his talk would get only barren words.

In his fading and declining years, Judge

Tiffany leaned more and more upon Eleanor, his business partner. Now it had come spring. The trees were in bud along the Santa Clara. They must begin preparing for the season. The family did not move to the ranch until apricot picking was afoot; but from now on either Judge Tiffany or Eleanor would run down every week to watch the trees and to oversee the Olsen preparations for harvest time. Purchase of supplies and the business of selling last year's stock, held over for a rise in German prices, kept Eleanor busy.

She dragged the Judge out of his library one March afternoon, that he might inspect with her a new set of sprayers which she was considering. The Judge went to his office all too seldom nowadays; Eleanor and Mrs. Tiffany used continually all kinds of diplomacies to keep him at his business, from which he stubbornly refused to retire. When they had driven their bargain, Eleanor guided and wheedled him to the office. The methodical Attwood, having his man there, thumped a pile of papers down before the Judge, representing that this demurrer must be in on Tuesday, that case tried or continued next

week. The Judge sighed as he pulled the papers toward him.

"They've nailed me, Nell," he said. "Here, I'll appoint a substitute. Send for Mr. Chester, Attwood—dining anywhere, Chester? Then take pot luck with us and pay me by escorting my business conscience home. I'll overwork myself if someone doesn't carry her away!"

The afternoon fog, forerunner of another rain, floated in lances above Montgomery Street. The interior valleys had felt their first touch of baking summer, had issued their first call on their cooling plant—the Golden Gate, funnel for mist and rain-winds. The moisture fell in sleety drops; yet only the stranger and pilgrim took protection of raincoat or umbrella. The native knew well enough that it would go no further. On these afternoons, neither cold nor hot, wet nor wholly dry, the blood is champagne and the heart a dancing-floor.

At the moment when Eleanor stepped out into the home-going crowd, she, an instrument tuned to catch delicate vibrations from earth and sea and air, felt all this exhilaration. Life

was right; the future was right; the display of a young female creature before the male —that most of all was right. And Bertram Chester, talking for the moment like his old, natural self, was a main eddy in the currents of joy-in-youth.

"You are bonny to-day!" she said quite naturally as she looked him over.

He blushed happily. And the blush helped restore him in her eyes as the natural Bertram Chester.

"And you're the bonniest of the bonny. I never saw you look so full of ginger except —" he hesitated there, and her words rushed in to meet the emergency.

"Thank you! Though I wasn't fishing, I am grateful just the same."

"Then you do find something now and then that you can stand for in me?"

"I find a great deal—when you are Bert Chester." He seemed to puzzle over this, to ponder it; so that she added:

"Let's not talk conundrums in this air and this crowd! We're not blue-nosed, self-searching New Englanders. Let's keep away from Market Street and walk through the Quarter. They haven't yet taken the Easter

things from the shop windows, and there's a darling atrocious group of statuary next door to The Fior d' Italia which you must see!" And then, as they turned the corner—

"What's the crowd? I'm for disremembering that I'm refined. I want to be curious!"

"Looks like a scrap—do you—"

"Nonsense! Come on. I divide women into those who would like to see a prize fight and admit it, and those who would like to see a prize fight and deny it!"

"Gee whiz!" said Bertram. They had reached the edge of the crowd, which circled about some knot of violent struggle and gesture. "Excuse me!" He had sprung from her side and was breaking his way through. By instinct, she followed into the hole back of him, so that she found herself in the second row of spectators to a curious struggle, the details of which flashed in upon her all at once.

Two laborers, gross, tanned, dirty, were fighting. They had swung side-on as the hole opened, and her glance focused itself upon the smaller of the two. He was an old man, quite gray; and down his scalp ran a

stream of bright blood which trickled upon his ear. The thing which puzzled her was the action of the older man. He seemed to be hanging to the arms of his younger and sturdier opponent; also he was talking rapidly, excitedly; and she caught only one phrase.

"Hit me with a nail, will you?"

And just then the younger man got his arm free, and dove for the pavement—dove at precisely the same instant with Bertram Chester. Apparently, the younger fighter arrived first; he backed off from the scuffle brandishing a piece of packing box. Then she saw what the old man meant. Pointing the weapon was a nail, stained red.

As this rough fury poised himself for the stroke, she took in the whole picture—a young, tall, brute man, one eye puffing from a new blow, the other blood-shot, the mouth open and dripping, the right arm raised for the murderer's blow.

Bertram Chester came between as though he had risen out of the earth. His left hand, with a trained aptitude which made the motion seem the easiest thing in the world, caught the upraised wrist. The laborer

ripped out an unconsidered oath and struck with his free fist at Bertram's face. Bertram evaded the blow, slipped in close. And then —in a lightning flash of speed, Bertram's right hand, which had been resting loosely by his side, shot upward. His whole body seemed to spring up behind it. The blow struck under the point of the chin. The head of the young bruiser dropped, then his shoulders, then his arms; his body sagged down upon Bertram. The champion of age shook him off; he dropped to the sidewalk. All this in a flash, in a wink.

The crowd, curiously inert, as all city crowds are until the leader appears, now followed this leader. A clamor of many tongues arose—"Get a cop!" "He's killed him!" "Do him up!" A short rush of half a dozen boys toward the fallen bully met the resistance of Bertram, who had turned as though anticipating such a movement. He shoved them back and raised his hand. His eyes were bright, his face flushed, and that smile which won and commanded men had broken out on his lips.

"Say," he said, "you all saw me do this

man fair and square. He isn't dead. He's only put out. He'll be all right in five minutes. You know it was coming to him. Now, I've got a lady with me, and I don't want her dragged into the police station. The cops will be here in a minute. I'd like to show this thing up in court, but we don't want to trouble the lady, do we? If I beat it, how many of you will witness to the cops just what happened?"

"I!" and "I!" and "I!" from the crowd and "Me! God bless ye!" from the elder warrior, who stood wiping the blood from his ear. Bertram gave them no chance for reconsideration. "All right!" he said, "here I go!" He pushed his way out as he pushed it in, swept Eleanor along with him. The spectators lifted a cheer; but only a mob of small boys followed.

"Beat it, kids, or the bulls will pipe me!" called Bertram over his shoulder. At this magic formula, the boys fell out. A half a block away, Eleanor dared look back. A policeman had just arrived; he was clubbing his way stupidly through the crowd. Bertram looked back too.

"All right," he announced, "now don't appear to hurry." At Kearney Street, he swung her aboard an electric car.

"Victory!" she cried as the conductor rang his two bells and the car gathered headway. "It was perfect!"

He stared down at her.

"Well, I just had to put it through once I got started, but say—I thought you'd sure be sore on me." His voice took on an apologetic tone. "It seems to me when I see a scrap, I constitutionally can't keep out of it."

"No more should you—such fights as that."

"Then you make distinctions?" he asked.

"If you mean that I distinguish between fighting just for the lust of it and fighting to protect the helpless, I may say that I do. You did well."

"Thank you!" he said, half-earnestly. "I'd have thought you wouldn't like to see me muss things up, that way." He was letting his voice slip away from him, both in volume and in manner, and the car was crowded. A panic necessity for concealment took possession of her.

"Surely we've evaded the police—let's get out and have our walk through the Quarter."

"I'm with you." Kearney Street, that thoroughfare which gathered into its two miles every element in American life, here struck its hill rise. Sheer above them hung Telegraph Hill, attained by latticed sidewalks, half stairs. The Latin quarter thronged and played all about them in the dusk and the fresh lamplight. And again, mood and spirits rose in her. The event whose swift, kaleidoscopic action still danced on her retina, the very stimulus of brutal youth in action, had conspired with the perfect night to raise her above herself.

"Oh, talk to me about it!" she said. "How did you do it—what do you call it—I want to hear *you* tell about it."

"I guess you saw it all—just a plain uppercut. Those blame city crowds would see a man killed before they'd think of anything but the show. I've always said that, and now I know it. I caught sight of the old man side-on and I saw he was hurt by something more than a punch. Far be it from me to spoil a good scrap, but that wasn't a fair shake. So I dropped you and started in. And then I saw that nail. I made a slip there," he let his voice fall in self-depreciation—"I should

have kicked that chunk of board away, instead of diving for it. He beat me to it. The rest was so easy it was a shame to take the money. Up comes his head and up comes my guard"—he stopped in the street to illustrate —"and he couldn't use his club any more than a kitten. I'd have let him go, if he hadn't hit at me—and clipped me. For a second, I could have bit nails in two. When I pulled myself in close, there was his chin just above me—a be-auty target. And an uppercut was his medicine." Bertram jerked his right hand up from his hip to illustrate the uppercut. Then he screwed up his face and felt of his right shoulder. "He marked me some," he said in explanation.

"Did he hurt you?" she asked with real concern. It ran into her mind that the conventional hero of romance makes his wound a scratch before his lady. If she expected that from Bertram Chester, he disillusionized her.

"Well, you don't take a punch like that, even glancing on your shoulder, without something getting loose," he replied. "I shouldn't be surprised if I'd slipped a cog or a tendon or something."

"Why—let's go home and see about it."

"Oh, it isn't bad enough for that!" Then he fell into reminiscences. In their toilsome passage up the hen-coop sidewalks of Broadway, he gesticulated—with constrained motions of his right arm—loosed the sparkle of his energetic, magnetic talk upon her. She drew close to him. Gradually, as the steps became steep, her hand slipped under his arm. She was only half-conscious of this motion; her consciousness was full of a softening toward him, a leaning upon that strength which she had seen in action. On his side, he did not fail to notice it—this first movement in her which had seemed like an advance. He stopped his buzz of talk at one moment and all the lines of his face relaxed as though he were about to say something softer and deeper. But he only caught his breath and changed to another story. He had remembered—and just in time, he thought—the advice of Kate Waddington.

But in spite of that remembrance, he permitted himself the luxury of being natural; and he talked continually until they were within the Tiffany doors.

Mrs. Tiffany must hear all about it from both of them. When they came to the hero's

injury, she dismissed Eleanor, made him strip his massy shoulder, and got out her pet liniment. The Judge, coming home in the midst of these surgical cares, heard the story retold with heroic additions by his wife. Dinner that night was a merry, a happy, an intimate party.

When Bertram left, Mrs. Tiffany did not follow him to the door, as was her old-fashioned custom. He waited a moment, as though expecting something. His eyes were on Eleanor. She did not move. She only bade him a simple and easy good night over her shoulder.

The old couple sat for a long time before the fire. Eleanor was gone—not to bed, could they but have known it, but to sit by her window and breathe bay-fragrance and drink the foggy night air off the Gate.

The Judge smiled down on that faded daintiness at his feet.

"Are we now to consider him in the light of a nephew-in-law?" he asked.

"It has bothered me a good deal," said Mattie Tiffany. "What do you think I ought to do?"

"If that frightful social responsibility of

yours drives you to anything," responded the Judge, "I should say you'd best leave it alone."

"But Edward, dear, I'm just like a mother to her—and goodness knows I haven't always been the best of mothers. There was her father—you know how long I shirked that—"

"The sin of omission that you will carry to your grave—"

"And somehow this is so like Billy Gray! It was just this way in her mother's case. When Billy came around—you remember how bonny a boy he was then, Edward—I, her own sister, could never tell how she felt toward him. I've always told you that Eleanor has slipped a generation. She's her grandmother, not her mother, in mind. But she's just like her mother in one thing. You can't ever tell what she's thinking about, and the deeper her thoughts go the harder it is to tell! That's why I'm considering all this so carefully—she doesn't commit herself in one way or the other. It's a sign."

"Knowing you, Mattie, I presume that you've conducted researches into his desirability as a nephew-in-law?"

"Well, shouldn't I? Goodness knows, we don't lead a conventional life in this family,

and I don't chaperone her. I reproach myself a little with that. When Mrs. Goodyear wanted to take her up and put her into the Fortnightly, it wasn't so much Eleanor's disinclination as my own laziness about getting up gowns and paddling about paying calls which kept me back—and that's God's truth."

"And these penitential exercises in detective work—what have they brought forth?"

"He's a little careless morally, I think. He's had too much conviviality about the Club. I'm afraid he's blossoming over young. They can say all they want about wild oats, but in this city it's a mistake to sow them all at once. That's one reason why I've been so good to him. I flatter myself that a house like this is a moral influence on him."

"It's all a concern for his soul with you, then?"

"No. Frankly, I like him. Everyone likes him. He's a dear. But as to Eleanor—"

The Judge had risen and taken off his skull cap.

"Well, she has run a ranch and she's travelled alone to Europe and back, and she's

saved the soul if not the body of a father. And I wonder whether a girl who's all that to her credit can't be trusted to deal with the problem of an undesirable though attractive young man—"

"If I were only sure he was undesirable!"

"It is according," responded the Judge, "to your definition of undesirability. If you mean worldly circumstances, you needn't fear for Bertram Chester. He resigns from my firm this month."

"What for?"

"Attwood brought me news of it. I don't know where he's going. I'm not supposed to know anything. But for to get rich, for one thing." He closed his book and restored it to its place on the shelves. "He took the left-hand road, you see. It was manifest destiny; and you and I and Eleanor cannot move one whit the career of that young man."

CHAPTER XII

WHEN Kate called him up over the telephone, inviting him, second-hand, to join a Masters party at Sanguinetti's restaurant, Bertram interrupted his banter to ask if Eleanor were going.

"I'm sure I don't know what her plans are," said Kate. "Why don't you ask her?" The tone was a little cold.

Remembering his duty, Bertram did ask Eleanor over the telephone.

"I'm sorry," answered Eleanor, "but I had to decline."

"Oh, duck your engagement if you have any!" he said, pleading like a boy. "It'll do you good to jolly up!" But she was firm. He matched the cool tone of Kate with the equally cool tone of Eleanor, and wondered, as he hung up the telephone, whether anything had gone wrong between those girls. He remembered now that he had not seen Kate at the Tiffany's since the expedition into

Chinatown. Had he but known it, he was perceiving late a thing of which others were making gossip already.

While Bertram freshened up his toilet in his room and thought hard on this, Kate Waddington, at home in the Mission, was making certain special preparations of her own. Mrs. Waddington could measure the importance of her daughter's engagements by the care she took with her toilet. Fresh lace indicated the first degree of importance, her latest pair of shoes the second degree, and perfectly fresh white gloves raised the engagement to the highest degree of all. To-night, all these omens served.

Further, Mrs. Waddington saw that Kate was rummaging through the unanswered letters in her writing desk, saw that she was comparing two of them. Kate picked up the larger one. She was wearing furs, since the April night was chilly. This letter she tucked carefully into her muff.

"Why in the name of common sense are you taking that letter along to a dinner party?"

"Oh, something I want to show someone," answered Kate after a momentary pause. Mrs. Waddington knew from old times the

hidden meaning of that pause. Just so, when at the age of seven they had caught her in the sugar-bowl, Kate had paused before starting her ready explanation. She had never overcome it; and her mother was the last person likely to acquaint her with that flaw of method.

"It's from Alice Johnstone, I judge by the handwriting," continued Mrs. Waddington.

"Oh, I guess so," responded Kate. She made rapidly for the door. "Good night, mother. I'll be home to-night, but rather late."

"Thank you for small favors—" but Kate was gone.

Sanguinetti's held a place in the old city no less definite than that of Zinkand's or the Poodle Dog. In the beginning a plain Italian restaurant, frequented by the Italian fishermen whose sashes made so bright the water front and whose lateen sails, shaped by the swelling wind like a horse's ear, gave delight to the bay, it had existed since the Neapolitans came to drag the Pacific with their nets. Painters and art students from the attics of the Quarter "discovered" it. When they made a kind of Bohemia about it, "the gang"

of tawdry imitators and posing professional Bohemians followed as a matter of course. That invasion put it on the fair way toward failure. But Sanguinetti's saved itself by dropping one degree lower. "South of Market" discovered it. That district is somewhat to San Francisco as the East Side to New York, though with an indescribable difference. Then came the milliner's apprentice who slaved all the week that she might brighten the "line" on Saturday afternoon, with the small clerk, her companion or the butcher-boy her beau. There came also the little people of the race track, as jockies out of a job, touts, bookmakers' apprentices —tawdry people mainly, but ever good-humored and ready to loosen restraint of custom after the second quart of Steve Sanguinetti's red wine. So this place came to have an air of loose, easy, half-drunken camaraderie, which seldom fell into roughness. It was the home of noise and song and easy flirtations which died at the door. When this transformation was fully accomplished, the painters and art students and seekers after "life" came back again. This time, they did not spoil its flavor. The fishermen had been

shy folk who fled from the alien invasion; no shyness about South-of-Market people on a holiday!

This Sanguinetti dinner party of Sydney Masters's differed but slightly, after all, from other slumming parties in the hostelry of touch-and-go familiarities. Amused outsiders, they watched the growth of swift flirtations, passed comments on the overdressed women, joined in the latest Orpheum songs which started when the cheap wine made music in the throat, chucked quarters into the banjoes of the two negro minstrels who came in at eight o'clock to stimulate merriment. Bertram, in his position as jester to King Masters, went a little further than the others. It was he who bought out the stock of a small Italian flower-vendor, that he might present a bouquet "to every lady in the place." His attention brought from the ladies varying degrees of gratitude, and from their escorts degrees of resentment which varied still more. Running out of flowers before he had gone clear around the room, he built up on toothpicks bouquets of celery and radishes, which he fastened to the corks of empty claret bottles and gave, with elaborate presentation

speeches, to the merrier and prettier of the neglected ladies.

From this expedition, he returned leading a little, sad man, who had the look of a boy grown old by troubles. A bleached-blonde woman followed them half-way across, but centre room she turned back with a stamp of her foot and a flourish of her shoulders.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Bertram announced, "I desire the privilege of introducing Teddy Murphy, California's premier jockey, lately set down on an outrageously false charge of pulling a horse. He is here, ladies and gentlemen, to tell you his troubles!"

A moment of silent embarrassment on both sides.

"Here—take my chair, Mr. Murphy!" spoke Kate from the foot of the table. The next table, set *a deux,* had just become vacant. Kate slipped into its nearest chair. Bertram's seat was back by the wall; to reach it, he must step over feet and so interrupt Mr. Murphy's tale of wrong. Nothing was more natural than that he should take the seat opposite Kate. And instantly—he having heard the story already—Bertram lost interest.

"Would you mind getting my muff?" asked Kate. "I think my handkerchief is in it."

As Bertram handed over the muff, she was smiling up at him. She did not look down until she had taken out her handkerchief, flirted out its folds. Then a little, disconcerted "oh!" escaped her.

"What is it?"

Kate was shaking out her skirt, was glancing rapidly to right and left. "Goodness!" she cried.

"What's the matter?"

"A letter. Have you seen it?"

Bertram looked under the table. There it lay, by his chair. He picked it up and passed it over.

"Oh!" she cried again, this time in a tone balanced between relief and embarrassment. She tucked it back into her muff, and her eyes avoided his. He noted all this pantomime, and he was about to speak, when Mrs. Masters touched Kate on the shoulder. "My dear, you're missing this!" she whispered.

Kate put all her attention upon Mr. Murphy and his burning story about the pulling of Candlestick. Mr. Murphy grew a little too broad; Mrs. Masters, as the easiest way

rid of him, rose and asked for her wraps. As Bertram assisted Kate, he saw her reach an anxious hand into her muff.

Outside, she contrived a loose shoe lace, so that she and Bertram fell behind. She did not approach the subject of the letter; that came up later and, of course, quite incidentally.

"Anything to confide in me to-night?" she began.

"Oh, nothing much. Gee, you can't tell about her, can you? Say, are you sure about your system? She was with me last Tuesday when I punched the jaw off a man, and she hasn't treated me so well since I knew her as she did after that. I was blame near opening on her again. Blame near. What's the answer?"

"A passing mood, perhaps."

"Well, I'd like to get her in that mood often."

"And you'll find that she's furthest from you in those moods—it's in them that she's least herself."

"This general girl proposition is a tough one," commented Bertram. "All right. You know the dope."

"You poor, perplexed boy!"

"Say, isn't it time you began confiding?"

"Oh, you caught it—the letter I mean—There are few things those eyes of yours don't see!"

"Man?" he continued, ignoring the compliment.

"Yes. It's a dreadful perplexity."

"Tell your old uncle!"

"Perhaps."

"You're in love?"

"I—I was. You see—ah, it's gone past the place where it should have ended!"

"Then why don't you break it off?"

"That's all very well to say, but he's a good man, and he says he's crazy about me. Do I seem happy to you?"

"Middling."

"I am—sometimes. Then something like to-day comes, and it puts me clear down in the heart. I have to keep up laughing and being gay when I'm all torn to pieces. I feel that I oughtn't to keep him in suspense this way. He's young, he's fairly rich—if that counted. When he's here, I often think I do—love him. When he writes, I know I don't."

"Poor little girl!" said Bert, catching sympathetically at the half-sob in her voice.

"Thank you," answered Kate on an indrawn breath. And then, "What would you do? I'm only a girl after all, am I not? Here I'm leaning on you, asking for advice."

Bertram did not answer for a time. Then:

"Sure you don't love him?"

"Not—not entirely. I might if he made me."

Bertram was looking straight down on her. His mouth was pursed up.

"Suppose he made you—and after you'd married him you got to feeling again as you do now. That wouldn't be square to him, would it?"

"I—perhaps not. But oh, it would hurt him so!"

"I guess he could live through it. They usually do, and don't lose many meals at that. I think he's running a bluff, myself."

Kate drew slightly away from him.

"That's a poor compliment."

Bertram studied her meaning.

"What?"

"To say that a man *couldn't* get crazy over me."

"Oh! Not on your life. Sure thing no. I don't know a girl anywhere that a man has more license to get crazy over. You're a beauty and you're just about the best fellow I know."

"I suppose you *had* to say that!"

"I figure that I wanted to. If I haven't said it before, it's because—" he stopped; Kate, as though it were an actual presence, could see the figure of Eleanor rising between them.

"Yes, I know—" she said quickly. "You do think I'm attractive then—cross your heart."

"Cross my heart, you're a beaut."

"But that doesn't get me any further with my troubles."

"What are his bad points that make you hold off?"

"Nothing more than a feeling, I suppose. No, it's more than that—something definite. It's—I find this thing hard to say. Not exactly weakness in him—more a lack of proved strength. He inherited his money; he's had the regular Eastern education. He's at work, managing his properties. But I'd feel so much more secure of his strength if he had

made it for himself. That is the thing I could admire most in a man; more even than kindness. To have him succeed from nothing because his strength was in it. I don't care how unfinished he might be—that would show he was a man!"

Bertram was still pausing on this, when Kate touched his arm.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that we must join the others. They'll be talking about us if we don't, and we mustn't have that—for Eleanor's sake if for no other!" They hurried ahead, therefore, and walked beside Mr. and Mrs. Masters all the way in.

At the studio door, Kate declined a half-accepted invitation to remain for the night.

"Mother isn't wholly well," she said, "and I can be fearfully domestic in emergency! It's only a step to the Valencia Street cars, and Mr. Bertram will get me home."

It was still too early for the theatre crowd; they found themselves alone on the outer seat of a "dummy" car, one of those rapid transit conveyances by which San Francisco of old let the passenger decide whether that amorphic climate was summer or winter.

He had, it seemed, to shake her back into

the story of her love-affair. Three times he approached the subject, and each time she fended it off. They had passed clear into the Mission, were more than three-quarters of the way home, before he launched one of his frontal assaults.

"You might give me some more work at my job of confidant," he said.

She began again, then; a story without detail; more a sentimental exposure of her feelings. The thing was growing like a canker; she fought it, but the decision, the feeling of his unhappiness should she give him final rejection, roosted on her pillow. It had never come to an engagement; it had been only an understanding; but she thought of dreadful things, even of his possible suicide, whenever she contemplated giving him the final blow.

The old-fashioned Waddington house stood on a big Spanish lot far out in the Mission. There was ground to spare; enough so that its original owners had room to plant trees without shading light from the windows. As they walked into the deep shadows, her voice took on an intonation like a suppressed sob.

"It is a comfort now to have said it, and it's a new life to have you for support. Oh,

Bertram, what a big, strong friend you are! Be good to me, won't you?"

She had stopped; in the shadows the clouded moon of her face looked up into his.

"Oh, won't you be good to me?"

He slipped his arm about her; and suddenly he kissed her.

She suffered his kiss for only a moment; then she moved away. He let her go, and she rushed ahead to the door. When he reached the step, she had faced about.

"Consider my *feelings,* Bert Chester," she said; and the screen door slammed.

CHAPTER XIII

JUST where the Santa Eliza trail commanded sight of the main travelled road, Eleanor sat on a rock watching the hill-shadows lengthen on the valley below, watching a mauve haze deepen on the dark-green tops of redwood trees. The time was approaching when she must hurry back to Mrs. Goodyear's bungalow for a dinner which she dreaded. Three weeks of perplexity had bred in her a shrinking from people. She had found excuse to wander away alone.

That lazy spring of the North woods, so like to early fall in other climates, had given her at first the healing of spirit which she needed. She wandered hither and yon as her fancy led her, following this trail, pushing into that opening in the chapparal. She had come out upon the Santa Eliza trail and gained sight of the road before she realized with a kind of inner shame the way in which

her feet of flesh had been tending, the direction in which she had been turning her eyes of the spirit.

Three miles away on the summit of the next ridge was the Masters ranch, and there rested the centre of her soul-storm. Bertram Chester, she knew by chance, was spending the week-end with the Masters.

She stopped by the rock, then; and immediately nature went out of her heart and the world entered. For three intolerable weeks, this heaviness had been descending upon her as by a whimsy of its own. Like the water of those cupped wheels in her little irrigation plant at the ranch, this black liquid, when it had filled its vessel to the brim, would empty automatically without touch on the spring of her will. When this came, she would feel rested, healed, in a state of dull peace. Now the struggle of thought was on her again. As always before, it began with an arraignment of the facts in the case, a search of memory for any forgotten data which might lead to a conclusion.

The first crisis arrived on the evening when Judge Tiffany came home in a plain mood of disgust, and announced baldly:

"Well, Mattie; our young friend did everything I expected of him."

He went on quite simply with the news. Bertram Chester had left him almost without notice. But that was to be expected. The rest was the worst. Bertram had gone to Senator Northrup—as manager of his real estate interests. The name Northrup was as the name of the devil in that household. Northrup's operations included not only law and politics but latterly speculative and unprincipled ventures in business. A dying flash of his old fire woke in Judge Tiffany when he spoke as he felt about this young cub who had bitten his caressing hand.

Eleanor left the dinner table as soon as she had a fair excuse. She found herself unable to bear it. Had she remained, she must have defended him. But alone in her living room she took counsel of this treason and agreed in her heart with her uncle. The very manner in which he had done it—never a hint, never a preliminary mention of Northrup—appealed to her as the deepest treason of all.

The next evening, Bertram Chester had the superb impudence to call. Eleanor was alone in the house that night. She hesitated when

the maid brought in his name, then shook herself together and went out to face him.

He met her with an imitation of his old manner, an assumption that his change in employment would make no difference in his social relations with the Tiffanys. What words had she used to let him know her feelings? She could not remember now. But it had come hard; for the unmoral half of her perceptions was noting how big and beautiful he looked, how his blush, as of a stripling facing reproof, became him.

He pleaded, he stormed, he presumed, he passed in and out of sulky moods, he began to defend himself against the silent attack of her look. Why hadn't he a right to do it? A man should look out for himself. But he'd have stayed and rotted with the old law office if he'd felt that she would take it that way.

"You mean more to me than success!" he said.

"No more of that, please!" she cried. After that cry, she fell into dignified silence as the only defence against the double attack from him and from the half of her that yearned for him. From her silence he him-

self grew silent until, with a boyish shake of his shoulders—lovable but comically inadequate—he bade her good night.

"You'll cool off!" he said at the door.

"Good bye," she responded simply.

"No, it's good night," he answered.

She woke next morning with a sense of vacancy in heart and mind. Something was gone. She did nothing for a week but justify herself for calling that something back, or nerve herself to let it go.

On the one hand, her mind told her that he had done the ungrateful, the treasonable thing. It did not matter that he might have done it through mere lack of finer perception. That was part of his intolerability. On the other hand, her heart ran like a shuttle through a web of his smiles, his illuminations, the shiver, as from a weapon suddenly drawn, of his unexpected presence, even his look when he stood at the door to receive her final good bye. The woof of that web was the sense of vacancy in her—the unconquerable feeling that a thing by which she had lived was utterly lost.

And where would he go if she let him go? Ah, the inn was ready, the room was swept.

He would go inevitably to Kate Waddington. That would be hard to bear. Sense of justice was strong in Eleanor; she realized the ungenerosity of this emotion while she continued to harbor it. But was there not justice in it after all? Kate Waddington could grasp, could guide, only the worst part of him. Kate Waddington had in her no guidance for the better Bertram Chester, who must be in him somewhere. She hugged this justification to herself. Perhaps it was not right to let him go; perhaps her heart and her duty were as one.

A cock quail came out from the chapparal, saw her, and bobbed back; the feet of his flock rustled the twigs. Now he was raising his spring call—"muchacho!" "muchacho!" Clearer and slighter came the call of his mate—"muchacho!" "muchacho!" A ground squirrel shook the laurel-bush at her side, so that its buds brushed her shoulder. The cock quail came back into the pathway, slanted his wise head, plumed in splendor, to find whether she were friend or enemy, saw that she made no move, and fell to foraging among the leaves. She had sat so long and so quietly that the little people of the ground were ac-

cepting her as part of the landscape. She began dimly to perceive these things, to take joy in them. And then they colored her mood.

What was she but a young, female thing, a vessel of life universal? What was her attraction toward Bertram Chester but a part of the great, holy force which made and moved hills, trees, the little people of hills and trees? What was she, to have resisted the impulse in her because of a few imperfections, a little lack of development in civilized morals?

Her perception of nature died away, but the slant which it had given her thoughts persisted.

When she felt and spoke as she had done that night in the Man Far Low, she was unwholesome, super-refined, super-civilized—she was proceeding by the hothouse morals which she had learned in books and in European studios. When she felt as she did on that first night under the bay tree, she was wholesome and eternally right.

How much greater in her, after all, if she had followed the call, had taken him for the man in him, to develop, to guide as a woman

may guide! Ah, by what token could she call him back?

Her gaze of meditation had been fixed on the road below. She had been half-consciously aware for some time of a figure which lost itself behind one of the hill-turns, reappeared again, became wholly visible in a band of late afternoon sunshine.

It was Bertram Chester. The vision came without any shock of first surprise. He had been so much part of her thoughts that it seemed the most natural presence in the world. He was swinging along the road in her direction, heaving his massive shoulders with every stride; he stopped, took off his cap, wiped his forehead with a motion which, seen even at that distance, conveyed all his masculinity, and strode on again.

Would he keep on along the road, or would he turn toward her up the Santa Eliza trail? And if he did keep on, would those roving eyes of his perceive her sitting there? Why not leave everything to that chance? If he looked up and saw her there on her rock, if he turned into the trail and passed her—that was a sign. She found herself, nevertheless,

humanly striving to cheat fortune and the gods by fixing all her mind and eyes upon him, as though she would hypnotize him into looking up.

But her mind and eyes had no power over him. He kept on with his even gait until he was lost behind the clump of trees which marked the branching of the trail. One chance was gone; she might not know the issue of the other until time and waiting informed her. How long before she should know? She crouched low on the rock and tried not to think.

The twigs and pebbles crunched under heavy feet; the branches shook and rustled; a blue sweater became visible in the shadows. She looked away.

"Well, I'll be—eternally blowed!" His voice came out like an explosion. Much as she expected it, she started. When, after a moment, she dared look up, he stood over her.

"Are you going to run away?" he asked. His voice, with its ripple like laughter, showed that he expected nothing of the kind.

"No," she answered, superfluously.

He seemed, then, to feel the necessity for explanation.

"I hadn't an idea—"

"Neither had I." She broke in to anticipate his thought. Each was lying a little; and both knew it. She rushed to commonplaces.

"Uncle Edward and I are at Mrs. Goodyear's bungalow over Sunday. It's our last expedition out of town before we go down to the ranch."

"Well, I must have had a hunch! I'm at the Masters ranch over Sunday. I got a freak idea to take a walk alone. It sure was a hunch!" Soft sentiment tinged his voice. She answered nothing.

"A hunch that you were alone here, nobody to interrupt—say, are you still sore on me?"

"I—I didn't run away—"

"Oh, I knew you'd get over it. I think even the Judge will get over it. I don't believe he'd care anyhow, if it wasn't for his old grouch on Senator Northrup."

"Perhaps. He's said nothing—to me—"

"But it's you I care about. Only you. I told you that and I mean it. I don't want you to be sore—I'd go back and bury myself

in the old office for life if I thought it would make it different with you."

"Would you, Bertram?"

He leaned close to her; she could feel his compelling eyes burning into her averted face. With one part of her, she was conscious that here was a crisis too great for her fully to feel; with the other part, she was aware that an ant, dragging a ridiculously heavy straw, was toiling up her rock.

Now he had her hand, which lay inert in his; now his arm was about her shoulder; and now he was speaking again:

"Can't you? Can't you stop looking down on me and believe I'm going to be good enough for you?"

She found power of speech.

"I never—I don't think that I'm too good for you!" Her Rubicon was crossed. It was a strangely long time before he kissed her, but the silent interval after the kiss was stranger and longer still.

"Tell me what you plan for our future, Bertram, for I am afraid!" she whispered at length.

"It's got to be a wait—that's the risk you take with a comer. I'll go on twice as fast

for you. What do you want—shall we tell about it, girlikins?"

"As you wish, Bertram."

"I guess we'd better not, then—not until the old Judge gets his back down. Let's have it just between me and my little girl.

"Say!" he added, the sentiment blowing out of his tone, "what was the matter, anyhow, that night on the restaurant balcony? Why did you turn me down then, and what made you so sore? I've never quite got to your thoughts, you know. But I'm going to!" He drew her closer. "Every one of them!"

She dropped her face on his shoulder.

"Ah, we've so many things to talk about, Bertram, and there's so much time! I've been a girl that didn't know her mind. Shan't we let that rest now? Shan't we be contented with what to-day has brought you and me?"

A film clouded his face.

"Yes—if you want it that way."

"Hoo-ooo-ooo!" Clear and high, but quavering, a masculine voice was calling across the ridge. Eleanor sprang up.

"That's Uncle Edward—it's dinner-time—

do you want him to find you—you'd better go!"

He stood as though considering.

"All right. When are you going back?"

"We catch the seven train to-morrow afternoon at Santa Eliza."

"Darn! I'd engaged to take on the five-ten at Las Olivas. I've half a notion to change and join you and see what the old man says—"

"No, Bertram, it's better not. We'll find a way. Go now!"

"You bet we will—good bye, girlikins!" He made no move to kiss her again; he turned and crashed down the trail.

Eleanor sped up the trail. Safe on the summit of the ridge, her secret hidden behind her, she answered the call. Then she dared look back at the figure vanishing in deep shadow below. Her expression and attitude, soft-eyed and drooping though they were, showed other emotions than unmixed happiness.

CHAPTER XIV

JUDGE TIFFANY turned from a consideration of the hillside to a closer consideration of Eleanor, who rode beside him in the Goodyear trap. She sat very straight, her hands folded in her lap, her grave, grey eyes staring not at hillsides nor spring skies, but into the far horizons.

Since he recovered from that purely human rage against this youth who had betrayed him to his dearest enemy, the Judge had been watching, with all his old interest, the surface indications of Eleanor's moods. Last night, it had been a kind of gaiety; to-day the mood was quiet, but not at all despondent; there was life in it. Judge Tiffany held his own views on the relations between his niece and Bertram Chester, and on the right or convenience of interfering. Twice he had been on the point of telling her that his feeling toward Bertram Chester should not color hers; that his house was still open to the young

man. But the curiosity of philosophical age to see how things will turn out had prevented him.

It was just as well. They were on the eve of their summer flight to the ranch, where she would have other things to think about than young men. That was his half-expressed theme when he spoke:

"Well, girl, will you be glad to get back to work again? You missed last summer."

Eleanor started as out of sleep.

"I think I am glad of everything!" she said cryptically. As though to turn the subject, she indicated a buckboard which was coming down an intersecting by-road at crazy speed.

"Why are they driving so fast?"

The Goodyear driver turned with the familiarity of a country henchman.

"That's the doctor's rig from Las Olivas," he said, "and he's sure going some!" Followed a monologue on the doctor and his habits.

About the next bend of the road, a little boy rushed from a wayside camp which looked strangely deserted for supper-time of Sunday afternoon. He waved both arms before his face.

"Hey, mister, take me to the wreck!"

"What wreck, kid?"

"The five-ten is over the trestle, and they went off and left me!"

Judge Tiffany took the information calmly, even selfishly. "I wonder if we'd better turn back and give it up to-night, or go on?"

Eleanor spoke with a catch of the breath, a drawn-in tone.

"Go on! Oh, tell him to go on!"

The Judge peered at her. She was pale, but, as always in her crises, the curtain of inscrutability made her face a mask. "Oh, do go on!" she repeated. Then, as though it all needed explanation, she added:

"We might be able to help!"

"Drive on, then—fast!"

Absolutely passive, Eleanor swayed a little with the trap, but made no motion of her own. Indeed, there was little motion within. The train had gone over the trestle, that was all. Bertram Chester was on that train. She must not try to think it out—must only hold tight to herself until she found how God had decided for her. Once it did occur that she had fretted her heart away over shadowy ills, toy troubles, while Bertram walked the earth

free and healthy. How trivial those troubles seemed beside this real apprehension! Once again, she wondered how she had been cruel enough to hold him at arm's length so long. Was this to be the punishment for her folly?

A buckboard, driven furiously, came over the hill-rise before them—the doctor's rig.

"Ask him—ask him!" she called to her driver. As they drew up alongside, the doctor's driver began talking without need for inquiries.

"Spread rail! The rear car just bucked over the trestle—"

"Anybody dead?"

"Two that I saw—and everybody in the rear car hurt. They're loading 'em on the front car to take 'em to town. Good bye—I've got to bring back medicine before they start!"

The chances were even—the chances were even. If he had been in the front car—relief. If he had been in the rear car—

The thing opened before them like a panorama as they topped the hill. The engine puffing regularly, normally, the baggage car and one coach on the rails behind it; a little crowd buzzing and rushing up and down the

trestle; a black, distorted mass of iron and splinters at the edge of the water below. Three or four heads appeared above the trestle, and the people swarmed in that direction. The heads grew to four men, carrying between them a bundle covered by a red blanket.

Judge Tiffany spoke for the first time.

"You'd better not see it, Nell!"

His words seemed to draw the curtain away from her self-control.

"Oh, go on—for God's sake, go on!"

As they drew up beside the undamaged coach, the bearers had just arrived with another body. Eleanor jumped down, rushed to the platform. The thing under the blanket was a woman. She turned into the coach, apprehension growing into certainty. She had not seen him in the crowd. If he were unhurt, he must be first and foremost among the workers.

The coach was a hospital—limp, bandaged people propped up on every seat; in a little space by the further door, a row of quiet figures which lay as though sleeping. Above them bent two men. Their business-like calm showed that they were physicians. The

half of her which stood aloof, observing all things, wondering at all things, the half whose influence kept her now so calm and sane, marvelled that she heard no moaning, tormented sounds. They were in the second stage of injury; the blessed anæsthesia of nature was upon them. For human speech, she heard only the low, quick voices of those who healed and nursed.

She saw a bare arm lifted from the press of huddled forms, saw that a physician had pressed a black bulb to it. The hand—the inevitable configuration of that arm which she had never seen bare—and she knew him.

Bertram lay on his side. His eyes were closed, his whole figure huddled; yet something more than the quiver of his body at the prick of the syringe told her that he was alive. His color had changed but little; hovering death showed mainly by a sharpening of all the lines of his face. Yet it did not seem to be Bertram, but rather some statue, some ghastly replica of him.

The physician stood up and stretched his back. She came close.

"Will he live?"

He turned impatiently, but he caught her eyes.

"He has a chance. He's young and strong —Is he—yours?"

"Yes—yes! What shall I do for him?"

"Are you sure you're strong enough—you won't faint nor carry on?"

"No—no! I'm sure of that. What may I do?" Judge Tiffany was beside her now. He looked, understood, and said nothing.

"Thank God for you, then! With all the crowd we haven't sane people enough to nurse one baby! Everything's the matter with him—broken arm, broken collar-bone, shock, and maybe he's injured internally. We can't be sure about that yet. I'm trying to make him comfortable, but"—here the agitated man broke through the calm physician for a moment—"No braces, no slings, no anything! We're going to town as soon as this company will let us. And he must be held. It's the only way to keep him comfortable. Come!"

Judge Tiffany touched the doctor's arm, but he spoke to Eleanor.

"Nell—you'd better let a man do that."

"No. You may help. How shall I hold him?"

All her will concentrated on obedience to direction, she followed the doctor while he drew Bertram's bare arm over her shoulder, set a cushion at his back, showed her how she must support his neck with her right hand.

"Hold him as long as you can, then have your friend relieve you. But change no more often than you find necessary. He'll get jostled enough before we reach town."

The Judge seated himself calmly. She was alone with the care of her dying. The necessity for comforting and reassuring him came into her mind.

"It's all right, Bertram; it's all right!" she whispered. He returned no answer, even of a flickering eyelash. He lay still, inert, a great bulk that tugged at the muscles of her arms.

After a time, her frame adjusted itself to the position. Her perceptions, still keenly alive, told her that her doctor was working over a woman in the corner. Just as the train started, she saw him rise, wipe his hands on his handkerchief, and motion calmly to

two of the men. They lifted the woman. Eleanor realized all at once what the motion signified. They had taken her to join the dead in the baggage car.

Next to Bertram lay an old man, his head so wrapped in bandages that she could see only the tip of his grey beard. A middle-aged woman—Eleanor recognized her as a camper whom they had passed on the road but yesterday—knelt beside him, talking into his ear about his soul. "Do you lean on your Savior?" she whispered. A kind of passing impatience touched Eleanor. So much had her sympathetic spirit absorbed the feelings of these dying ones, that she resented this as an intrusion, an unwelcome distraction from the business of sloughing off the flesh.

A little sag of Bertram's body, which alarmed her for a moment until she saw that the movement came from relaxation of her own arms, called her back to responsibility. The realization that it *had* called her back brought with it the amazing, shameful realization that it had ever wandered away.

Why—

From the moment when she took him into her arms, she had never thought of him as

her dying lover—never as her lover at all!

A man in extremis, a thing so beaten and suffering that she called for it on her Christ—he was all that, in common with the other beaten and battered and senseless wrecks about them. But the feeling that he was her own, about to go from her, had never entered her heart. She was ashamed while she thought of it; but it persisted. Not hers? Why, she had suffered him to kiss her only yesterday! Must she think of such things with a life to save?

Now, her body was giving way with weariness; it seemed that she could hold him no longer. She nodded to Judge Tiffany, therefore; the old man rose and gently took her burden from her. She sank back on the empty seat. When the faintness of fatigue had passed, she fixed her eyes on the still face of him who had been her lover.

Why was it? The clear-cut profile, so refined and beautiful since suffering gave it the final touch, had thrilled her only yesterday and through a succession of yesterdays. It had no power to thrill her now. She tried to put back this unworthy thought, but it persisted. In spite of pity and all decency of

the heart, that outer self of hers kept saying it to her like an audible voice. Were he to die now, in her arms, she should work and weep and pray over his passing—but only as she would work and weep and pray over that alien old man who lay beside him, that woman whom they had just carried away.

The Judge was flagging. He glanced wearily over his shoulder, as though he hesitated to ask for relief. She rose; and without a word she took his place. And now, as she knelt with Bertram's slight yet heavy breathing in her ear, her thoughts became uncontrollable nightmare—scattered visions and memories of old horrors, as when she saw her father drunk on the pavement; a multitude of those little shames which linger so long. One incident which was not quite a shame thrust itself forward most insistently of all. It was that episode under the bay tree, when she was only a little girl. Why did that memory start to the surface those tears which had been falling so long within? Her weeping seemed to lift her to a tremendous height of perception, as though that outer self had flowed in upon her.

That which had lured her and dragged her

to him in the end, was the life in him, the strong, vigorous body, the gestures, the smiles. That which had held her away from him was the soul within him—high and clean enough as souls go, but not one which she could ever know, and not one which could ever know hers. In this struggle of passing, he was all soul; the body was not in it.

She held the plan of her puzzle; it was necessary only to set the scattered blocks into place.

She found herself whispering to him; she checked herself until she remembered that he could not hear:

"O Bertram, you are not mine! O Bertram, you could never be mine!"

Now she could look straight at the possibility of his death or recovery. And she could weigh and choose, in case it was life, between telling him what she felt, or going on with him to the end—walking with a soul apart, yet choosing paths for it, too. That last might be the road of honor. That fine and heroic course, indeed, came to her with a high appeal. She had made her one resolve of duty. Perhaps it was her destiny to immolate herself for duty to the end.

The train bowled on, stopping for no stations. The old man in the corner was unconscious or asleep; the woman who tended him had stopped her spiritual ministrations. A child, propped up in one of the rear seats, had awakened to cry, fallen asleep, awakened and wept again. She had in her voice a thick, mucous note, which became to Eleanor the motif in that symphony of misery. Otherwise, no one seemed to be making sound except the two physicians. Her own doctor came up once, pressed a syringe again into the bare arm, whispered that it was all going well.

A whistle came muffled through the fog; they were slowing down. It was a station; the lights, the clamor of human voices, proved it. Eleanor looked out of the window. A knot of young men had broken for the platform; and she could distinguish the black boxes of cameras. There arose a sharp parley at the rear door; her doctor muttered "reporters—damn!" and hurried back. Judge Tiffany rose and followed him. Over her shoulder Eleanor caught the white, intent face of Mark Heath. "He knows; they have told him," she thought.

Judge Tiffany, his mind on the practical necessities of the case, still had it in him to admire the control of that good soldier, the modern reporter. When he told simply what had happened, how the issue lay balanced between life and death, Mark only said:

"My God!—and me with the story to do!" Then his eye caught Eleanor.

"Did she—has she been nursing him?"

Judge Tiffany glanced at the other reporters, clustered about the conductor, at the photographers, holding animated wrangle with the physicians about flashlights.

"Keep her out of your story—you can do that. Say I found him on the train—put me in—that's a good story enough. Keep my niece out. Keep the others off. Keep those flashlights muffled!"

Mark hurried forward. One look, a look which contorted his face, he bent on Bertram. Then he spoke puzzles to Eleanor.

"You're Miss Brown, a camper at Santa Eliza, if anyone asks you—and when we leave this train you stay by me and do everything I tell you."

"Very well."

Mark touched Bertram's face with a ten-

derness almost feminine. "Poor old man!" he whispered; and he hurried back.

A shock-headed youth accosted him.

"What's up there?" he asked.

"Good story," answered Mark. "I've got it all—don't you fellows bother. Bertram Chester, old California Varsity tackle, real estate manager for Northrup and Co., seriously injured, may not recover. Get his injuries from the doctor. His late employer, Judge Edward C. Tiffany, reached this train at Santa Eliza and has been taking care of him."

A voice came from the group of reporters:

"Why, he's your roommate!"

"I know it—damn it! Keep on. Judge Tiffany has been caring for him, holding him up so he could bear it, assisted by Miss Sadie Brown, a camper at Santa Eliza. She's the one I was talking to."

"Who is she? Any chance for a photograph?"

"I braced her for a picture. She wouldn't stand for it."

"Let me try! I'll get it."

"See here, you fellows, I'll attend to that. I'll let you all in if she gives up. I'll play

you square. He's my roommate—can't you trust me to handle it? Keep on. Miss Sadie Brown, works at the Emporium, lives 2196 Valencia—" Mark was reading from a perfectly blank sheet of copy paper—"Judge Tiffany will take him home. He wired ahead for a private ambulance from Havens. That's all of that. Now what have you fellows got? Help me out; it's none too easy for me."

As he took notes, asked questions, formed his "story" in his mind, Mark never took his eyes off that group in the corner.

Now they were racing down the last stage of the trip, with full freeway. Now they were drawing into the ferry station. Under the lights stood a buzzing crowd, its blacks shot with the white coats of hospital orderlies. A dozen ambulances, their doors open, stood backed to the platform. Eleanor sagged down on the floor with a sigh as two orderlies lifted Bertram's arms from her shoulders, made shift to get him upon their stretcher.

But the doctor stopped them.

"Get this old man first," he said, "and be careful. That young fellow ought to pull through."

CHAPTER XV

TOWARD morning, Eleanor managed to get a little sleep. When full daylight wakened her to the dull realization of her situation and burdens, she hurried into clothes, crept to the solid, old-fashioned best bedroom where they had put Bertram, and took counsel of the nurse. Everything was hopeful; she got that from the professional patter of temperatures and reactions. It seemed that there might be no internal hurt. He had roused from his shock in the night; had seemed to know where he was and what had happened. He lay now in a natural sleep, but he must be kept very quiet.

On the way downstairs, Eleanor met face to face with her aunt. Mrs. Tiffany had been awake since the ambulance brought responsibility; but her eyes showed more than want of sleep. The two women stopped, looked long at each other; then Mrs. Tiffany took Eleanor tenderly in her arms and kissed her.

"Don't you worry, dear," she whispered, "he will get well, and everything will be all right with Edward and me."

Eleanor did not answer at first. She drew a little away from her aunt's embrace, before she found tongue to say:

"Please don't speak of that, Aunt Mattie —oh, not of that now!"

As she made her way out to the piazza, in an instinctive search for air and room, she was crying.

In the limpness of reaction, she sank into a chair. Every joint and muscle, she realized now, ached and creaked. She could lift her arms only after taking long thought with herself; and the soul within was as burned paper.

The front gate clicked. The first, doubtless, of those inquiring visitors who would read a meaning into the adventures of last night. That, too, was to be faced this day! The pattering, hurrying footsteps sounded near to her before she looked up and recognized Kate Waddington.

If Kate had been crying, the only evidence was a hasty powdering which left streaks of white and pink before her ears. On first glance, Eleanor marvelled at her appearance

of control, at the lack of emotion in her face. But insight rather than conscious vision told Eleanor of the currents which were running under that mask. At the bottom Eleanor detected a fear which was not only apprehension of the news from Bertram Chester, but also a cowardly shrinking from the situation. She fancied that she could even trace Kate's consideration of the proper shade of acting in the circumstances. All this in the moment before Kate sprang up the steps and asked:

"Oh, will he live?"

A baser nerve in Eleanor quivered with the desire to be cruel. She had to put it down before she could tell the simple truth. One little corner of Kate's mouth quivered and jerked for a second under her teeth before she caught herself and resumed the impersonation of a solicitous friend.

"Tell me all about it," she said.

"Ah, I am too tired!" Nevertheless, Eleanor did manage a plain tale, ending with the nurse's report and with her own conviction that he would live.

"Oh, of course he will live!" And then—"Who is nursing him?"

She looked up on this question, which was also an appeal, a begging.

"We have a nurse," answered Eleanor shortly. It gratified her a little, in her low state of consciousness, to be thus abrupt. The better part of her realized this; saw how she was wreaking the revenge of an old emotion. A reaction of generosity prompted her next words; but she spoke with an effort.

"You may help if you want to. Uncle Edward must go to the ranch this week—unless—don't you want to come here and stay in my spare room?" It seemed to Eleanor that she had never made a harder sacrifice than the one which she sealed with that invitation.

This, too, brought Kate out of her impersonation. Her whole figure straightened for a second, and—

"Oh, might I?" she said.

"I should be very glad. Will you come up to see him—one may look in at the door. He is in Uncle Edward's spare chamber."

As they threaded the involved halls of that rambling dwelling, Kate hurried on ahead. Eleanor, from the rear, threw out a word or two by way of direction. At the door, opened to get air of a dull and heavy morn-

ing, they peered into the grim order of the sick room. The nurse had already stripped it to hospital equipment. His face, refined almost into beauty by pain and low-running blood, lay tilted to one side as he slept. The nurse touched her lips. Eleanor nodded. The nurse turned back toward her patient. Eleanor dared look at Kate.

Her color had changed from pale, back to the pink of life; now it was turning pale again. She noticed neither Eleanor nor the nurse; she stood as one in a universe unpeopled save by herself and another. Once, her two arms quivered with an involuntary outward motion, and once she swayed against the lintel.

And Eleanor, watching her through this wordless passage, gathered all the currents that had been running through her will into an indeterminate determination. In that moment she realized the full bitterness of a renunciation that does not mean renouncing a wholly dear and desired thing, but does mean renouncing the beloved thing which one is better without.

Kate turned at length. Eleanor, as their eyes met, could read in her face and body the

change as the actress took command once more. Kate flew at once to her hollow conventional phrases.

"The poor, poor boy!" she said. "Oh, we must all help!"

Eleanor turned away with the feeling that this made it harder for her to perform her renunciation—if real renunciation it were.

The day brought too much work, activity, purely material anxiety, for a great deal of thought. They had cut off the telephone in the main wing of the Tiffany house and switched the current to the instrument in Eleanor's living-room. Most of the day she spent answering that telephone. People of whom she had never even heard, made anxious inquiries about the condition of Mr. Chester. Before night the newspapers became a plague. For in the afternoon, winged reporters, shot out in volleys for a "second day story," had called at 2196 Valencia and found there no Sadie Brown. Hurrying down the back trail to the Emporium, they did discover an indignant little shop-girl of that name. Those reporters who had been with the wreck the night before found no resemblance in her to

the mysterious lady. Then came a bombardment, in person and by telephone, of the Tiffany house. The Judge, meeting all callers at the front door, lied tactfully. The city editors gave up sending reporters and took to bullying over the telephone; so that the burden of an unaccustomed lying fell upon Eleanor. At eleven o'clock, and after one voice had declared that the *Journal* had the whole account and would make it pretty peppery if the Tiffanys did not confirm it, Eleanor took the telephone off the hook and went to bed.

The morning papers did pretty well with what they had. "Mysterious Woman Nurses Prominent Varsity Athlete"—"Who Is The Pretty Girl that Nursed Society Man in Las Olivas Horror?"—"Modest Heroine of Las Olivas Holocaust." But the secret, thanks to Mark Heath, was safe.

She slept that night. Far along in the morning she awoke to the delicious sense of physical renewal. The situation crept into her mind stage by stage, as such things do arrive in the awakening consciousness. She was calm now, what with her rest of body, her

decision of soul. She could think it out; her course of action and how she might accomplish it.

A knock at her door roused her from half-sleep and meditation to full wakening. Kate Waddington had entered—Kate, transformed into a picturesque imitation of a nurse. She was all in grass linen, the collar rolled away to show her round, golden throat. Her flowing tie was blue, and a blue bow completed the knot of her hair. She looked cool, efficient, domestically business-like.

"He's better!" Kate burst out with the news as Eleanor turned her head. "There's really no danger now. The nurse says that he roused this morning and showed a positively vicious temper because they would not let him see anyone."

"That's pleasant news. I was sure that he would recover." Eleanor caught an unconsidered expression, no more than a glint and a drooping, in Kate's eyes. This answer, so calm, so entirely unemotional, had touched curiosity if nothing more. But Kate chirped on:

"I'm playing Mama's little household fairy —how do you like the way I dress the part?

I sent for these clothes last night. Now you're to lie abed and let me bring you your breakfast. Are you rested, dear? It was enough to kill two women!"

"Quite rested, I think."

Kate opened the window, bustled about putting the room to rights.

"Shall I bring your coffee now?" she asked at last.

"Yes, thank you."

Kate was back in ten minutes with table and tray. Whatever she did had an individuality, a touch. That tray, for example—nothing could have been better conceived to tempt the appetite. She set out the breakfast and remained to pour coffee and to talk.

"And isn't it good—mustn't you be thankful—that it won't leave him lame or disfigured or anything like that! His shoulder may be weak, but what does a man need of shoulders after he's quit football?"

Eleanor just glanced over her coffee-cup, but she made no answer. Kate turned her course.

"Won't you let me open your egg for you?"

"No, thank you." Then, "You're very kind, Kate."

"I am the original ray of light. Do let me fix those pillows. You're going to lie in bed all the morning, you know. Shall I bring you the papers? You should see them! They've got you a heroine."

"Me!" Now Eleanor showed animation.

"Oh, not you. We've all kept the secret well. You're a mystery, a pretty shop-girl to the rescue. I hope the weeklies don't find the real story."

"I hope so."

Kate rose, made another pretense at setting things right in the room, and moved toward the door. A relief, a lowering of tension, came over Eleanor. But at the threshold, Kate turned.

"Oh, I nearly forgot! They sent up from Mr. Northrup's office this morning for some documents or deeds or something which they thought Mr. Chester might have in his pockets. The nurse brought out his clothes so that Mrs. Tiffany and I might go through them—I felt like a pickpocket. And we came across a package of proofs—photographs of him. We opened it to see if the old deeds might be in there. And they're

such stunning likenesses—Muller, you know—that I thought it would do you good to see them."

"Thank you, I should like to."

Kate drew the photographs from her bosom and handed them over. As Eleanor took them and began mechanically to inspect them, she caught an unconsidered trifle. Kate was not leaving the room. She had stepped over to the cheval-mirror, which faced the bed, and was adjusting the ribbon in her hair. Looking across the photographs through her lashes, Eleanor saw that the counterfeit eyes of Kate in the mirror were trained dead upon her.

She examined them, therefore, with indifference; she stopped in the middle of her inspection to ask if Judge Tiffany were up yet.

"They're excellent likenesses," she went on indifferently. "That's a good composition. I don't care so much for this one. That's a poor pose." She had come now to the bottom of the pile. This last print was one of those spirited profiles by which Muller, master-photographer, so illuminates character.

"Oh, that's a wonder," cried Eleanor. "Such a profile!" Then, at the thought how

Kate might misinterpret this purely artistic enthusiasm, she dropped her voice to indifference again.

"Won't you please tell Aunt Mattie that I will get up if I can be of any use?" And she held out the package.

Kate packed up the tray and withdrew. Eleanor heard the muffled tap of her heels in the hall. The sound stopped abruptly. It was fully a minute before they went on again.

Kate, in fact, had rested the tray on a hall table, drawn out the photographs, and run over them, looking at them with all her eyes. The profile was at the bottom of the package. When she reached that, she hesitated a moment; then, with a quivering motion that ran from her fingers over her whole body, she tore it in two. Short as this explosion was, her recovery was quicker. She glanced with apprehension over her shoulder at the door of Eleanor's room, tucked the photographs back in her bosom, and took up the tray again.

Eleanor, when the sound of the tapping heels had quite died away, turned her face toward the wall and gave herself to thought. She had gathered up the last strand of the

tangled web. Nothing was left but the unweaving.

First, his soul was not hers, as her soul was not his. That impression, received in a crisis which, she felt, was to be the crisis of her life, had grown to be an axiom. His youth, his vigor, the pull of a stalwart vitality which made his coarseness almost beauty—that had been the attraction. His spirit, so blazing but so full of flaws—that had been the repulsion.

Did not her own spirit have its flaws? Doubtless. Who was she, then, to judge him? Ah, but they did not fit into her flaws!

Kate Waddington now—Eleanor turned her thoughts in that direction with difficulty—her flaws were akin to his. Kate could tolerate and admire the whole of him. His lapses in finer standards, such as that desertion to Northrup—did they not fit like the segments of a broken coin with Kate's diplomacies of that very day, her subtle reaching to discover if Eleanor were really a rival? Kate would weigh his compromises with honor as lightly as he would weigh those pretty treacheries. He would be successful;

everyone had felt that in him from his very first flash on the horizon. Kate would help him to the kind of success he wanted. Her tact, her diplomacies, her *flair* for engrafting herself, would be the very best support to his direct methods of assault. They belonged to each other; and since now Kate's desires in the matter had become manifest, only one thing remained.

All this allowed, what should her own line of conduct be? How should she bear herself in the days and weeks when pure human kindness must inhibit her from delivering a shock? Would it be necessary to commit the inner treason of posing to him as a secret fiancée? Well, that must be lived out, step by step. She could at least take all possible means, within the bounds of kindness, of withdrawing herself gradually from him, of paving the way for the ultimate confession. Kate Waddington would help in that. There, her own game and Kate's ran parallel.

This discovery of Kate at the end of the tangled strings brought a tug at her heart, a black cloud to her spirit. She hated Kate Waddington. It made her grip the pillows to think how much she hated. Her mood de-

scending into a bitter, morbid jealousy which had no reason for being, but which momentarily swept all her resolutions away, sent her mind and body whirling back toward Bertram Chester.

That passed. The last trace of her wild animal hatred for Kate Waddington was borne away on a prayer of the old faith which held her instincts. She rose from her bed in a state of fixed determination that never faltered again.

When Eleanor was dressed, she turned not to the front of the house where the business of drawing back a life was afoot, but to the fresh silences of her garden. She walked to the lattice whose view commanded the bay and the distant Gate. It was a quiet, dull-gold morning on the Roads. A tug fussed about the quarantine wharf; the lateen fisher-boats were slipping out towards the Sacramento. And white and stately, between the pillars of the Gate, a full-rigged ship was making out to sea on a favoring breeze.

Eleanor watched the sea-birds bending toward it, the mists creeping down to cover it. The soul within her leaped toward it and seized it as a symbol.

"O ship," she whispered, "take this too away with you! I give it to the pure seas. Take this little love away with you!"

That rite, with its poetry and its self-pity, brought exaltation into her resolution. The sacrifice was complete.

CHAPTER XVI

LIFE and spirit came back to Bertram Chester with a sudden bound. By the fourth day, he was so much alive, so insistent for company, that it became a medical necessity to break the conventional regulations for invalids, and let him see people. As it happened, his father was the first visitor. Judge Tiffany, who thought of everything, had telegraphed on the night of the accident, and had followed this dispatch, as Bertram improved, with reassuring messages. Bert Chester the elder, it appeared, was off on a long drive into Modoc; two days elapsed before his vaqueros, left on the ranch, could reach him.

He arrived with his valise on the morning of that fourth day when Bertram roared for company. He was a tall, calm man, with a sea-lion mustache, a weather-beaten complexion and the Chester smile in grave duplicate. He was obviously uncomfortable in his town clothes; and, even at the moment when they

were leading him solemnly to the sick room, he stepped in awe through the Tiffany splendors. When Mrs. Tiffany told him that Bert was doing well, would doubtless recover and without disability, he said "That's good!" and never changed expression. Mrs. Tiffany, lingering at the door, saw and heard their greeting.

"How are you, Bert?" said Chester senior.

"Pretty well, Dad," said Bertram. Then awkardly, with embarrassed self-consciousness of the rite which he was performing, Mr. Chester shook his son's hand.

After their short interview, Mr. Chester, a cat—or a bear rather—in a strange garret, roamed the Tiffany home and entertained her who would listen. He warmed to Kate especially, and that household fairy, in her flights between errands of mercy, played him with all the prettiness of her coquetry. At luncheon he quite lost his embarrassment and responded to the advances of three friendly humans. Yes ma-am, he had been glad to learn that Bertram was doing well in the city. He had five sons, all doing well. He'd risked letting Bert try college, and it had turned out all right. There wasn't much

more left in the cattle business; but he was an old dog to learn new tricks. If he had it to do over again, he'd try fruit in the Santa Clara Valley, just like they had done.

As the afternoon wore away bringing its callers, its telephone messages and its consultations of doctors, his mood shifted to uneasiness. He spent an hour walking back and forth in the garden. Just before dinner-time he approached Mrs. Tiffany and Kate, who were sewing in the living-room, and said simply:

"Well, I guess I've got to be going."

"Why, we're just getting acquainted!" cried Kate.

Mrs. Tiffany merely flickered an eyelash at the assumption of privilege which this implied. But she answered, after a moment, "We should like to have you stay. Even at that, don't consider us when it is a case of being near your son."

"Well," answered the older Chester, ponderously, "you see it ain't like I had only this one son and hadn't been through trouble. There's Bob now. I worried quite a lot more than was necessary when the Artiguez outfit shot him up, but he pulled through. And

after Pete got scrambled by a riata, and a few more things of that kind happened, I stopped worrying any more than was necessary. He'll get well, and you're handling him fine. You've been blame good to the boy," he said; and the touch of sentimental softness in his voice showed how genuine was his hardly expressed gratitude. He began talking rapidly, as though ashamed of it. He hoped they all could come to see him on the ranch some time, though there wasn't much there to attract a lady. Still, the boys had pretty good times now and then. If the Tiffanys liked fresh venison, the boys always got some deer in the season.

"It's lovely down there, I know. Bertram —your son—has told me so much about it!" broke in Kate.

"We'd like to see you, too," said Mr. Chester. Then, catching the implication, embarrassed by it, he retreated to his room and came back in an incredibly short time with his valise. He had turned toward the door when Mrs. Tiffany said:

"I think Bertram is well enough so that you might see him again."

"Oh, sure," replied Mr. Chester, as recall-

ing a neglected trifle. He dropped his valise and strode back to the sick-room for a short stay.

All that day, Eleanor harbored a dread, which turned toward night to a relief—dread of the first interview, relief that Bertram had not sent for her. Kate, waiting her chance, slipped secretly into the room after Mr. Chester had gone. Bertram was awake. He smiled in a measured imitation of his old smile when she entered, and extended his uninjured hand. She did not take it; instead, she patted it with her cool, long fingers, made to soothe. And considering that the nurse was watching, she looked a long time into his eyes.

"They sure smashed me up some," he said. "But I'm a-knitting. How did it happen that they swore you in?"

"I wanted to help!"

"That was being pretty good to little Bertie!" He withdrew his hand to drop it above hers, and he looked long into her face. "Pretty good to little Bertie," he repeated, "and now I want you to be better, and not ask any questions about it. Is Miss Gray—Eleanor—about the house?"

"Yes."

"I thought she might have gone to the ranch. Well, just about to-morrow, will you get her in here—alone?"

"Are you ready—to be agitated?"

"Now you don't know what I want—or you wouldn't be asking questions. Will you?"

"Yes, Bertram."

"You mustn't talk any more," spoke the nurse from the corner. And Kate withdrew.

When, next morning, the two girls met in the hall before breakfast, Kate repeated the message simply, carelessly. Eleanor found herself struggling to keep face and color. In spite of her long inner preparation, the emergency came to her with a sense of surprise. How should she carry off this interview? Though her respite had been long, though she had thought much, she had no prepared plan of campaign. Must she lie for the sake of his bodily health, assume the part which she had been playing when he went out of life? Even the question how to get rid of the nurse was a tiny embarrassment.

She mustered her voice to say:

"I think I'll look in now. Invalids are likely to be awake at this hour of the day."

"Yes, you must be eager!" dabbed Kate.

The nurse was no obstacle. She looked up toward the figure in the door, said: "A young lady to see you, Mr. Chester," and withdrew. Eleanor stood alone by the foot of the bed, looking into the eyes of her problem.

He made no motion. He did not even put out his hand. He regarded her with the frown which usually broke into a smile. Now, it continued a frown.

"Well, things happened, didn't they?" he said. His voice burst out of him with almost its normal force.

"Yes, Bertram. A great deal."

"And I thank you. It was bully work. I don't see how you stood it, holding me up the way you did—it ought to have killed off a man, let alone a girl. Didn't hurt you anywhere, did it?"

"No—who told you?" Her voice was hard and constrained.

Now Bertram smiled. It was different, this smile, from the old illumination of his features. She could not tell, in the moment she had to think, whether it was his illness

that changed it so, or whether it really held a bitterness which, superficially, she read into it.

"That's the answer," he said enigmatically. "You didn't know I was onto everything, did you? I never went out but once—just after the crash when the car turned over. I began to know things while they were carrying me up the bank. From that time, I was just like a man with his wind knocked out. It didn't hurt much, but I couldn't move a finger or a toe. I didn't want to move if I could. I was too busy just keeping alive. I couldn't open my eyes, but I heard everything. You just bet I heard everything!"

This descent of the conversation into reminiscence and apparent commonplace gave Eleanor an opening into which she leaped. It was wonderful; she had read of such cases. Had he heard that child crying in the corner, and had it bothered him? Had he been conscious that it was Mark Heath and none other who was asking so many questions? Mark Heath had done so much for them—she would tell him about it some other time. But Bertram still lay there with his frown of a

petulant boy on his face, and her voice ran down into nothing for lack of sympathy in her listener.

"Do you remember all you said?" he asked when she was quite silent.

"I think so—why?" The question had brought a little, warm jump of her nerves.

"Everything? Something you said to me?"

"I think so, Bertram."

"Did I dream it, then?"

She made no answer to this, but her knees failed under her so that she sat down on the bed. Had she—had she said it aloud?

"Something like this: 'Bertram, we don't belong to each other'?" He laughed a little on this; even a certain blitheness came into his laugh, as though he should say, "the joke is on you."

A sense of the shock she might give him moved her to temporize.

"Let us not talk of it now, Bertram. Let it be as it was until you're better."

"I'll be a blame sight better after I get this off my system. You see—well I couldn't think just then, but now, when my think tank

has resumed business, I savvey a heap of things. One is that you weren't telling me any news."

"What makes you say that?" Eleanor bent her grave grey eyes on him.

"I had the signal already. I mightn't have seen it fully if this smash hadn't come, but just the same I caught it away ahead of you. That afternoon up on the Las Olivas trail when we came together. When I kissed you."

Had she ever let him kiss her?

He made an incurved gesture of his free hand, as though joining two wires.

"It didn't connect. That's all. I was acting on a hunch when I told you to keep it dark. Told anyone?"

Not until afterward did she think to be offended by this question. At the time, she answered with a simple negative.

"That's good. It is just between us now. I suppose the matter with me was that I wanted to fly high, and you were about the highest thing in sight—"

"Don't, Bertram. I'm not high. Am I hurting you? Oh, am I unkind when you are ill?"

"Oh, if you think it's hurting me, you're off. This is a swell way to talk, isn't it, considering that I'm here—" his eyes swept the aristocratic comforts of the Tiffany spare room.

"We mustn't think of that. It's too big to think of that!"

"I guess you're right. Now that is finished, going to forgive me because I walked over to Northrup?"

"I've nothing of any kind to forgive. It's you, I think, that must forgive."

"Oh, it's all square, everything's all square. I want to be good friends with you if you'll let me. I hope," his voice was almost tender, "you connect with the right man. He won't have any too much blood in his neck, but he'll have a lot of general culture in his system."

Here she realized that she had something to forgive. She repeated, mentally, her act of renunciation as she said:

"You're a great, strong, generous man. I can't tell you how much I thank you for the course you've taken to-day. You're going to succeed and—some woman—is going to be proud of you." She had avoided by a thread

naming the woman. "I shall be glad I knew you, and I shall be your friend as long as you'll let me."

He smiled his old smile and his uninjured hand went out.

"Shake!" he said.

Yet it was a relief that the nurse came back and said quietly, "You've talked enough." As she walked to the door, Eleanor found that her will was focused on the operation of her feet, commanding them to move with decent slowness. Had she obeyed her impulse, she should have run. She forced herself to turn at the door and smile back, forced herself to bridle her emotions and go quietly to breakfast and to her ordeal with the lightning thrusts of Kate Waddington.

Two days later, Eleanor followed Judge Tiffany to the ranch. A perplexing fruit season brought her fair excuse. The year before, the Japanese, adventurers in minor labors, had begun to flood the Santa Lucia tract. They drove out the Chinese; when that spring brought picking contracts, no Oriental was to be had save a Japanese. In the first rush of that season, the Japanese

pickers on the Tiffany ranch, in concert with all the other Japanese of Santa Lucia, had thrown down their baskets, repudiated their agreements, and struck. It needed more than Judge Tiffany's failing strength, more than Olsen's methodical plodding, to conquer this situation.

She must be a post now, not a rail, Eleanor told Mrs. Tiffany. And Kate would help until Mr. Chester could be moved. At further acceptance of Kate, Mrs. Tiffany rebelled. Kate had foisted herself on them. Goodness knew, Mrs.Tiffany couldn't tell why they had ever accepted that situation. It didn't seem to her even decent.

"You'll perplex me greatly, dear 'Aunt Mattie, if you don't let her remain now!" said Eleanor, looking up from her packing.

This remark, cryptic though it was, came as a fresh shower to Mrs. Tiffany's curiosity. Never before had Eleanor so nearly committed herself on the subject which lay like lead on her aunt's responsibilities. It prompted Mrs. Tiffany to try for a wider opening.

"Would you like it, dear, if we brought Mr. Chester down to the ranch to recuperate

when he is better? I'm sure Edward wouldn't object. After all, he's ready to forgive the Northrup affair."

Eleanor looked up significantly.

"If you're consulting my wishes, certainly not!" she said.

The sigh which Mrs. Tiffany drew expressed deep relief. Thereafter, they proceeded straight ahead with the arrangement. Eleanor went on to the ranch. Kate, remaining, made herself so useful in a hundred ways that Mrs. Tiffany's irritation wore itself away.

The old combination of Eleanor and an attractive though undesirable young man had moved her to a perilous sympathy. Now that it was over, now that she had no more responsibility in the matter, she transferred some of that vivid and friendly interest to the new arrangement. She caught herself resisting a temptation to spy on their conversations; she watched Kate's face for tell-tale expression whenever Bertram's name came up in their luncheon-time chats.

Kate usurped all the finer prerogatives of the nurse. Hers it was to arrange the sick-room, to put finishing touches on bed and

table, to feed him at his meals. Her tawny hair made sunshine in the chamber, her cool hands, in their ministration, had the caress of breezes. He was getting to be an impatient invalid; he bore the confinement harder than he did the ache of knitting bones. Kate's part it was to laugh away these irritations, so that she always left him smiling.

He went on mending until they could get him out of bed; until, on an afternoon when the sun was bright and the wind was low, they could take him into the garden for a breath of air and view. He made the journey out-of-doors with Kate supporting him unnecessarily by the armpit. She set out a Morris chair for him by the lattice, so that he could overlook the Bay, she tucked the robes about him, she parted the vines that he might have better view.

For a moment he swept the bay with his eyes and opened his lungs to the out-door room and air. Then his gaze returned to Kate's strong, vigorous yet feminine back, as she stood, arms outstretched, hooking vines on the trellis. The misty sunshine was making jewels in her hair.

"Say!" He spoke so suddenly and with

such meaning in the monosyllable that Kate blushed as she turned. "Say! is that fellow still writing to you—the one with the Eastern education and the money?"

Kate dropped her eyes.

"No," she said softly. "I told him—I have broken it off—lately."

Bertram laughed—his old, fresh laugh of a boy.

"You saved me trouble then. I was just about to serve notice on him that henceforth no one but little Bertie was going to be allowed on this ranch."

Kate did not speak. She continued to look down at the gravel walk.

"Now don't you go pretending you don't know what I mean," Bertram went on. "Just for that, I won't tell you what I mean. But you know."

"What about Eleanor?" murmured Kate.

"You little devil!" answered Bertram. "Come over here."

Kate sank down on the edge of his chair, and dropped one arm about his neck.

Mrs. Tiffany, viewing the morning from the window of her room, saw them so. At first, she smiled; then a heavier expression

drew down all the lines of her face. She crossed to her dresser, where a long frame of many divisions held the photographs of all whom she had loved. The first in order was of a woman who had a face like Eleanor's; a more beautiful Eleanor, perhaps, but with no such grave light of the spirit in her eyes. This she touched with her finger tips. But her look was bent upon the second, the portrait of a young man whose attitude, defying the conventional pose of old-fashioned photography, showed how blithe and merry and full of life he must have been.

"Ah, Billy Gray!" she whispered, "Billy Gray, you know, *you,* how sincerely Eleanor and I ought to thank God!"

THE END